



China, Vietnam to expand cooperation

President: Nations should embrace new opportunities

By MO JINGXI
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President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday that Beijing and Hanoi will embrace new opportunities in expanding their cooperation in areas such as trade and the economy, as well as interconnectivity and the digital economy, as China continues deepening reform across the board and advancing Chinese modernization.

He made the remarks when meeting in Beijing with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, who is in China for the 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the Summer Davos, held in Northeast China's coastal city of Dalian.

Noting that China always sees Vietnam as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy, Xi said China is ready to work with Vietnam to strengthen strategic guidance of bilateral ties, firmly support each other and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, to jointly march toward modernization.

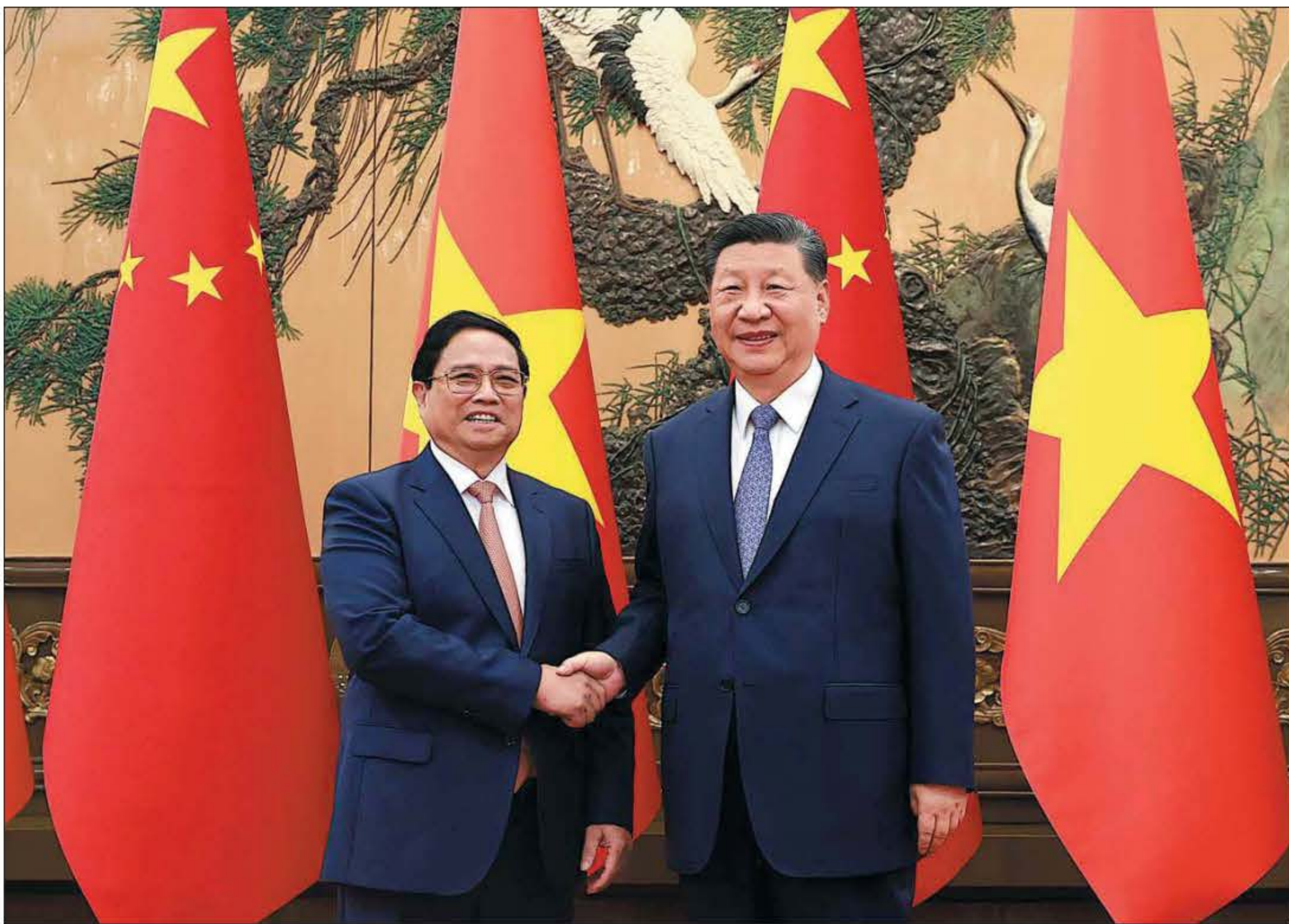
While China will encourage more of its enterprises to expand their investment in Vietnam, it is hoped that Vietnam will provide a fair, just and nondiscriminatory business environment for them, he said.

China is Vietnam's largest trading partner and its second-largest export market, while Vietnam is China's largest trading partner within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Bilateral trade has expanded from about \$2.4 billion in 2000 to exceed \$229.7 billion last year, official statistics showed.

Chinh's visit came after the two nations announced the building of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance, during Xi's visit to Vietnam in December.

Xi said that for more than half a year since then, high-level exchanges between the two countries' political parties and governments have been frequent and cooperation in various



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday.
FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

fields has witnessed progress, which has brought concrete benefits to their peoples.

"We are quite pleased with it," he told the Vietnamese prime minister, vowing to join hands with Vietnam to make greater contributions to world peace, stability, development and prosperity.

To consolidate public support for China-Vietnam friendship, Xi called on the two countries to strengthen communication between border provinces, implement projects in agriculture, education and healthcare aimed at improving people's well-being, and make good use of platforms

promoting people-to-people and youth exchanges.

He also stressed the need for the two neighboring countries to appropriately handle their maritime issues, speed up joint exploration at sea and jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.

The Vietnamese prime minister, who spoke highly of China's significant role as an important engine and bedrock for global economic growth, said his country supports China's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, to which Vietnam is a party, and opposes the politicization of trade and tech issues.

He added that Vietnam supports China's position on the Taiwan question and firmly adheres to the one-China principle.

Noting that it is the top priority for his country to deepen strategic mutual trust and practical cooperation with China, Chinh said that Vietnam will make the construction of the China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance its strategic choice and this will not be affected by external instigation and interference.

Xu Liping, a senior researcher on Southeast Asian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that strengthening coop-

eration between China and Vietnam, both socialist countries advancing modernization, is a win-win choice for them.

Xu said cooperation at the subnational level will be one of the new areas of growth for China and Vietnam as the two countries, connected by land and sea, have witnessed rapid development in border trade in recent years and are working on promoting interconnectivity through Belt and Road cooperation.

Wang Huning, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, also met with Chinh on Wednesday.

Xi calls for promoting common prosperity in ethnic areas

By WANG QINGYUN
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President Xi Jinping has called for sustained efforts to promote high-quality development and common prosperity in areas with large ethnic minority populations.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remark on Tuesday in a reply letter to people in Jingning She autonomous county in East China's Zhejiang province.

The She ethnic group is one of China's 56 ethnic groups. Statistics show that there are about 746,000 members of the She ethnic group in the country.

Established in 1984, Jingning is China's sole autonomous county of the She ethnic group. The population of the ethnic group in the county stood at 18,410 at the end of last year, roughly 11 percent of the county's total.

In a letter sent recently to Xi, the county's Party and government authorities highlighted Jingning's achievements over the past 40 years and vowed to take the lead in promoting common prosperity in ethnic regions.

In the reply, Xi expressed his warm congratulations on the 40th anniversary of the founding of the county.

Commending the county's accomplishments, Xi said he is happy to know that people of all ethnic groups are leading better lives.

He encouraged Jingning to continue to uphold fine traditions, strengthen ethnic unity, and leverage its unique advantages to usher in a new chapter of development.



INSIDE

Mbappe's return fails to hide France's flaws

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Country stepping up efforts for data reforms

By FAN FEIFEI
and ZHANG XIAOMIN
in Dalian, Liaoning

China is accelerating steps to promote reforms related to the market-oriented allocation of data elements and put data assets into the balance sheets of enterprises, as data has become a new type of production factor and plays an increasingly vital role in bolstering industrial revolution, according to the country's top data governance regulator.

More efforts are needed to speed up the establishment of basic systems for data, facilitate the circulation, transaction and utilization of data, and boost the construction of digital infrastructure, in order to fully unleash the value of massive data resources, said Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration.

Liu made the remarks on Wednesday during the World Economic Forum's 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the Summer Davos, in Dalian, Liaoning province.

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EURO 2024 SPONSORSHIP DEALS DRIVE CHINESE BRANDS DEEPER INTO EUROPE

Flagship companies widen markets, highlight product innovations, burnish international reputations

By FAN FEIFEI
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Although China's national soccer team is not taking the field at Euro 2024, the country's flagship companies are filling stadiums and television screens through hefty sponsorship deals and with



advertising billboards. Chinese companies account for more than one-third of the 13 top-tier sponsors at the ongoing UEFA European Championship

in Germany, making the country the single-biggest source of sponsorship for the event.

The strong sponsorship demonstrates the rising technological prowess and competitiveness of Chinese brands on the global stage and their commitment to expanding into overseas markets, experts said.

Financial technology company

Ant Group, home appliance giant Hisense, e-commerce platform AliExpress, smartphone manufacturer Vivo and electric vehicle maker BYD are among the official global sponsors for the championship, which runs from June 14 to July 14, according to UEFA's website.

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Foreign students wear gowns newly designed with traditional Chinese elements at Beijing Normal University's graduation ceremony on Wednesday. QI YUGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Graduates' gowns get traditional flair

By ZHOU HUTIYING
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Ling Ziyi had an extra reason to feel special on the most important day of her four years of undergraduate studies at Beijing Normal University, as she proudly wore the university's newly designed gown for her graduation ceremony on Wednesday.

"I was really excited when I received the traditional Chinese-style gown several days before the ceremony," said the 22-year-old graduate of the School of Arts and Communication. "Each gown is

embroidered with the university emblem, the school motto and our name and student number, symbolizing that each student at the university is unique."

A design team led by Oscar-winning art director Ye Jintian, also known as Tim Yip, spent three years designing and improving the exclusive gowns.

The team selected colors from the traditional Chinese palette for the gowns of those receiving bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, and chose a faint magnolia pattern to represent the students' tireless pursuit of a

noble spirit.

Ling, who will undertake post-graduate studies at the university, expects to get a master's graduation gown next.

"The gown is not only a unique and meaningful graduation gift, but also reminds us, no matter where we go, that we need to keep in mind the spirit of our school motto," she said.

"We will carry the expectations and wishes of our alma mater, making positive contributions to society," she added.

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Expansion: Chinese firms take center stage

Nico Williams of Spain takes a selfie with his Vivo Player of the Match trophy after the Euro 2024 group stage match between Spain and Italy on June 20 in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. GETTY IMAGES

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As the official payment sponsor of Euro 2024, Alipay+, the cross-border mobile payment platform owned by Ant Group, announced plans to expand cross-border digital payment acceptance, and provide convenient payment services and special benefits for global soccer fans and travelers through its merchant network during the tournament.

Together with the company's two other international brands — Antom merchant payment services and international payments business WorldFirst — Alipay+ has appeared on LED billboards at tournament stadiums and on 50 TV channels across Europe.

The UEFA top scorer trophy, sponsored by Alipay+, will be awarded at the Euro 2024 final in Berlin.

Huge exposure

The company is accelerating steps to expand its presence in the United Kingdom and EU countries including France, Italy, Switzerland, Spain and Germany as globalization is one of its core strategies.

As of this month, over 400,000 merchants in Europe accept mobile payments through Alipay+ from 14 international e-wallets and banking apps, according to a news release from the company.

Users of Alipay+ partner wallets can make mobile payments at department stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, airports, duty-free stores, restaurants and tourist attractions by just scanning an Alipay+ QR code.

Alipay+ expects this summer to be busier than usual as sports fans travel from around the world to watch Euro 2024 and the upcoming Paris Olympic Games. The company said it will enable more merchants to benefit from the expected influx of fans, athletes and tourists via its mobile payment technology and digital solutions.

In 2018, Ant Group's digital payment arm Alipay and UEFA announced an eight-year global partnership for all UEFA national team soccer competitions from 2018 to 2026, including Euro 2020, Euro 2024, and the UEFA Nations League finals. Before the partnership, major global sporting event sponsorship had for decades been provided by international bank cards like Mastercard and Visa.

This year's European Championship is expected to draw a global audience of more than 5 billion, according to the marketing director of UEFA.

Other global sponsors of the event include Adidas, Booking.com, Coca-Cola and Qatar Airways.

UEFA estimates Euro 2024 will generate 2.4 billion euros (\$2.6 billion) in revenue,

mainly from broadcast and sponsorship deals, ticket sales, hospitality, and licensing fees for official tournament merchandise.

The tournament presents an important opportunity for companies to reach new consumers, increase brand exposure, and expand their businesses in overseas markets, industry insiders said.

In the 1980s and 1990s, it was common for Japanese and South Korean companies, such as Sharp and Samsung, to be major sponsors of international sports events, but in recent years they have been absent from top-tier sponsorship.

Chinese brands are now leading the change of sponsors, with their names seen in commercials and on billboards at global sports competitions.

It is the third consecutive UEFA European Championship for which Hisense has been a sponsor. The company is the official screen provider for the video assistant referees during this year's tournament, and it is providing display technology support for the central VAR room in Leipzig, Germany, to help on-field referees make decisions.

"Continued investment in world-class sporting events represents Hisense's determination to become a global brand, and it helps us build stronger relationships with global consumers and accelerates the company's globalization process," said Jia Shaoqian, chairman of Hisense.

In 2016, the company became the first Chinese sponsor of the UEFA soccer championship. It also sponsored the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia and the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

European advances

Shipments of Hisense TVs in Europe surged 35.9 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2024, data from market consultancy AVC Revo shows. The company accounted for 13.6 percent of global TV shipments during the same period, ranking second in the world, according to market research company Omdia.

Hisense, based in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, has ramped up its efforts to expand its footprint in the European market in recent years. The company has set up six research and development centers and five major manufacturing bases, with sales revenue on the continent rising 19.5 percent year-on-year to 3.8 billion euros last year.

Hisense's total revenue surpassed 200 billion yuan last year, while its overseas sales reached 85.8 billion yuan, accounting for 43 percent of total revenue.

The company is also stepping up its investment in product research and development and technological innovation to target high-end overseas markets and improve its customers' viewing experience.

Fang Xueyu, president of Hisense's inter-

An increasing number of Chinese enterprises, especially those gaining a competitive edge in frontier sectors including digital payments, cross-border e-commerce, smartphones and NEVs, are seeking new development opportunities in overseas markets..."

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the Central University of Finance and Economics' China Center for Internet Economy Research

national marketing unit, said localization is at the core of globalization, and companies need to satisfy local consumers' demands as well as provide products suitable for local markets.

"Chinese companies sponsoring the Euro 2024 soccer tournament highlights these enterprises' determination in going global and leveraging major sports events to showcase their latest products, technologies and achievements in innovation to a global audience," said Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation's e-commerce research institute.

Hong said sponsorship of important international sporting events is conducive to connecting with consumers across the globe, helping Chinese enterprises speed up global business plans, and significantly enhancing brand recognition and a company's international standing.

Sports marketing is an important way for Chinese brands to increase their global competitiveness, expand their footprint abroad and boost sales in overseas markets, Hong added.

Electric avenues

For the first time, BYD is an official partner of the European Football Championship, and has replaced German automaker Volkswagen as the event's official vehicle supplier. "This prestigious event will enable us to showcase our latest advancements in electric vehicles to a far-reaching audience," BYD said on its website.

The company is providing a diverse range of new energy vehicles during the tournament. It is also presenting its latest new energy vehicle models and cutting-edge technologies at the competition venues,

which help show soccer fans BYD's commitment to greener and more intelligent motor-ing solutions.

BYD exported over 242,000 vehicles last year, surging 334 percent year-on-year. It has entered the markets of more than 70 countries and regions, including 19 European nations.

In December, the company announced it plans to build a new EV production base in Hungary as it steps up efforts to make inroads into the European market. The facility, the first of its kind to be built by a Chinese auto company in Europe, is expected to create thousands of jobs. Hungary will be the center for BYD's European production operations, it added.

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the Central University of Finance and Economics' China Center for Internet Economy Research, said, "An increasing number of Chinese enterprises, especially those gaining a competitive edge in frontier sectors including digital payments, cross-border e-commerce, smartphones and NEVs, are seeking new development opportunities in overseas markets fueled by the rise of China's economic strength and industrial upgrade."

Sponsoring Euro 2024 shows Chinese enterprises want to expand their sales channels and increase their voice on international cooperation, Ouyang said. The sponsorship will help more overseas consumers learn about China's technological advantages in some emerging and strategic forward-looking sectors, he added.

Vend it like Beckham

Cross-border e-commerce has become an important driving force for bolstering the steady growth of China's foreign trade.

Alibaba's cross-border online marketplace AliExpress is the exclusive e-commerce platform partner for Euro 2024, and is investing millions of euros in discounts, deals and other promotions during the tournament.

"As football enthusiasm spreads across Europe, we will bring fans even closer to the action, with great deals on a vast selection of popular and trending products, as well as interactive games and the chance to win fantastic prizes," said Gary Topp, European commercial director of AliExpress.

The company has signed former English soccer star David Beckham as its global brand ambassador. Beckham helps fans participate in the "Score More with AliExpress" promotional campaign with exclusive discounts and prizes, including match tickets.

AliExpress and Cainiao Group, Alibaba's logistics arm, have expanded their global five-day delivery service to encompass several prominent markets. Consumers in Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK can now

receive their parcels within five working days after placing an order on AliExpress.

Sales of soccer equipment soared 80 percent year-on-year in May, according to data from the group. Spain and France saw the highest sales of soccer balls, while the number of parcels sent to Europe from Cainiao's cross-border warehouses skyrocketed more than 300 percent in May from a year earlier.

Vivo, the official partner and smartphone provider for Euro 2020 and Euro 2024, said the sporting event provides an exceptional opportunity for the company to showcase its cutting-edge smartphone technology on the global stage and connect with soccer fans.

The company is committed to expanding its global presence and reaching consumers in more markets across the world.

Global smartphone shipments grew by 6 percent year-on-year to reach 296.9 million units in the first quarter, according to global consultancy Counterpoint Research. Vivo accounted for 7 percent of the market share and is among the top five smartphone makers.

Building brand image

Beyond financial sponsorship, Chinese companies have brought products and technological support for the tournament, said Jiang Han, a senior analyst at market consultancy Pangoal.

"Chinese enterprises can participate deeply in all aspects of Euro 2024 through the sponsorship, and establish a closer cooperation relationship with the event," he said.

This will not only help build brand image, reach more potential consumers and boost the visibility of Chinese enterprises in Europe, but also create more business and cooperation possibilities to boost revenues and nurture new profit growth points, Jiang said.

"With the rapid development of China's economy and improvement of its international status, Chinese enterprises have begun to seek opportunities for international expansion," he said. "Sponsoring world-leading sports events will enable enterprises to make forays into overseas markets and enhance their global operation capabilities."

Zhan Junhao, founder of Fujian Huace Brand Positioning Consulting, said sports sponsorship allows Chinese companies to demonstrate their technological strengths and innovation capabilities. This is conducive to further consolidating and enhancing their positions in industries. It also enhances a brand's popularity and influence in the international market.

Enterprises should pay close attention to market dynamics and changes in consumer demand during the tournament, and adjust marketing and product strategies in a timely manner, Zhan added.



From left: Chinese auto brand BYD is the official vehicle supplier for Euro 2024 in Germany. IMAGO/BEAUTIFUL SPORTS Billboards of China's home appliance giant Hisense and the official payment sponsor of Euro 2024 Alipay+ (right) are seen during a match between Germany and Switzerland on Sunday in Frankfurt, Germany. BERNADETT SZABO / REUTERS AND KAI PFAFFENBACH / REUTERS

TOP NEWS

Nation vows to further deepen opening-up

State Council executive meeting calls for more efforts to attract foreign investment

By WANG KEJU wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

China will intensify efforts to further attract foreign investment, in order to drive the growth of the world's second-largest economy in the new development paradigm, according to an executive meeting of the State Council, the country's Cabinet, on Wednesday.

The meeting, which was chaired by Premier Li Qiang, decided that the country will take steps to deepen opening-up efforts in key sectors, focusing on removing market access restrictions on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector and introducing a new round of pilot measures to expand opening of the service sector.

Domestic and foreign companies will be treated on an equal footing when participating in various sectors, including in large-scale equipment upgrades and government procurement. Efforts will also be made to improve the facilitation of investment and optimize foreign investment policies in areas such as pharmaceuticals and medical devices, according to the meeting.

Additionally, it was noted at the meeting that China will release a revised version of the industry catalog that encourages foreign investment and makes it easier for foreign nationals to work in China.

Foreign direct investment in actual use on the Chinese mainland totaled 412.51 billion yuan (\$56.8 billion) in the first five months of the

year, which was 28.2 percent lower than the figure for the same period last year, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed. Despite the decline, 21,764 new foreign-invested enterprises were established, up 17.4 percent year-on-year, according to the ministry.

Meanwhile, foreign companies saw a 16.7 percent increase in profits in the first four months of the year, well above the national average of 4.3 percent, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

The scale of foreign investment in actual use is still at a historically high level, even though there has been a decrease in the amount, which is primarily due to the impact of last year's high base, said an official with the Commerce Ministry.

Notably, in the first five months of the year, the manufacturing sector attracted 117.11 billion yuan, accounting for 28.4 percent of the total inflow of foreign direct investment. This represents an increase of 2.8 percentage points compared with the same period last year and points to ongoing improvement in China's investment structure.

Foreign businesses operating in China continue to exhibit stable investment expectations and confidence in the country's market. Recent surveys conducted by various business chambers found that more than three-fourths of United States, European and Japanese companies planned to sustain their operations in China, the official added.

Joint project



The China-Romania Joint Laboratory for Cooperation in Agriculture is inaugurated on Tuesday at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest, Romania. The laboratory is expected to enhance Sino-Romanian collaborative research in agricultural science and technological innovation. XINHUA

Design: Trend combines tradition and innovation

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It has become popular among the nation's graduates to wear traditional Chinese-style decorations, such as a graduation cap embellished with *zanhua*, a traditional floral headdress, and *yunjian*, a decorative shawl draped over the shoulders. This year, more universities like Beijing Normal University have joined this trend when upgrading their gowns.

For example, a design team from Shandong University's School of Mechanical Engineering created the exclusive *yunjian* for graduates of the university in Jinan, Shandong province.

The *yunjian* features the spring swallow, which represents good luck in Chinese culture, and a carp leaping over a dragon gate, which symbolizes a bright future for the graduates.

Some graduates also choose to wear items of *hanfu* — traditional attire of the Han ethnic group that includes horse-face skirts, which feature a distinctive pleated design — beneath their graduation gown while posing for photos or attending their graduation ceremony.

"In fact, it is not the good sale season for *hanfu* in the summer, but we recently received a large number of orders for *yunjian* and horse-faced face skirts," said Yao Chixing, general manager of Luoruyan Hanfu Company Co in Caoxi-an. "Products with elegant and atmospheric styles featuring traditional Chinese patterns such as auspicious clouds and flowers have better sales well."

Li Jie, dean of the School of Fashion Design at Shandong University of Art and Design, said that the trend of Chinese-style attire during graduation season is not a superficial trend, but rather a manifestation of the fashion industry's dedication to the inheritance and innovation of traditional Chinese culture.

The young generation continuously strengthens its sense of identity with local culture, infusing traditional attire with a sense of ceremony and providing momentum for the flourishing of Chinese-style fashion, Li said.

Zhao Yimeng in Beijing and Zhao Ruixue in Jinan contributed to this story.

NATIONAL VISION, LOCAL ACTION



A dancer in traditional costume performs at the Jinci Temple Museum in Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi province, in March. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Taiyuan aims to build key cultural, tourism destination

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and ZHOU HUIYING

Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi province, has been promoting the deep integration of culture and tourism and improving the quality of services in sectors such as catering, accommodations, transportation, sightseeing, shopping and entertainment in recent years, said the city's top official.

The city aims to create an important cultural and tourist destination both domestically and internationally, Wei Tao, Party secretary of Taiyuan, told China Daily in a recent exclusive interview.

According to data from the Taiyuan Bureau of Culture and Tourism, during this year's three-day Dragon Boat Festival holiday, which started on June 8, major scenic spots, parks, museums, tourist leisure districts and nighttime cultural tourism hubs in the city received nearly 2 million visitors, up 29.7 percent year-on-year.

The city's tourism revenue during the holiday totaled more than 32.8 million yuan (\$4.51 million), a year-on-year increase of 39.9 percent.

"Taiyuan is a nationally renowned historical and cultural city with a history of over 2,500 years," Wei said. "It has been deeply exploring historical and cultural resources, inheriting and protecting urban cultural heritage, and making concerted efforts to build a city of museums."

Taiyuan currently has a total of 101 museums of various levels and types, he added.

"There are 2,237 immovable cultural relics and 541 cultural heritage

sites in Taiyuan, bearing rich historical and cultural legacies from the city of Jinyang in the early Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) to the city of Longcheng in the Sui Dynasty (581-618) and the city of Bingzhou in the Tang Dynasty (618-907)," Wei said. "Each museum connects the past, present and future of a city."

There are over 30 forest parks spread across the city and the Fenhe River, the second-largest tributary of the Yellow River, flows through Taiyuan, creating a picturesque scene.

"Taiyuan experiences mild winters and summers without extreme heat, with an average summer temperature of 23.5 C, offering a cool and pleasant climate and making it a well-known summer resort," Wei said. "The city also boasts unique folk customs, such as Jin Opera and drum performances as well as a diverse culinary culture with a wide variety of dishes — the famous mature vinegar, and nutritious and healthy foods like millet and buckwheat."

Meanwhile, Taiyuan has prepared a luxury package for tourism investors, setting up a special fund of 1.3 billion yuan, with project investments eligible for rewards of up to 50 million yuan, he said.

"For travel agencies, we have prepared a lucky bag, implementing a policy of rewarding bulk tourism reception. Travel agencies that attract visitors will be rewarded based on the number of tourists, and those ranking at the top will be eligible for a one-time reward of up to 1 million yuan."



Wei Tao

In addition, the city has prepared a gift package for tourists, with 11 departments jointly issuing measures to support the development of the concert economy.

"We have set up a dedicated service guarantee team and introduced heartwarming measures such as free visits to State-owned key scenic spots and free rides on public transportation like buses and subways for concert ticket holders," Wei said. "These initiatives aim to support the growth of the concert economy and accelerate the construction of an important performing arts center in North China."

To accelerate the pace of building an important domestic and international cultural and tourism destination, Taiyuan has already established a tourism brand system that features elements such as history, culture, ecology, revolutionary heritage and industrial bases, as well as leisure and health.

Wei summarized the essence of Taiyuan with four phrases — integration of ancient and modern, amazing mountains and waters, rich and vibrant atmosphere, and abundant vitality.

"The 2024 Shanxi Tourism Development Conference will start at the end of June," Wei said. "We warmly invite tourists to the city for a cultural journey, a study tour, a discovery trip, and a health and wellness voyage."

Contact the writers at zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn

Data: Measures sought to protect privacy

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Liu said that China is stepping up efforts to put data resources into better use as well as establish a data property rights system, a circulation and trading system and a revenue distribution system.

The purpose of allowing companies to include data resources as "intangible assets" in their financial statements is to further encourage them to develop and make use of data, promote the circulation and trading of data resources, and empower social and economic development, Liu noted.

He also called for efforts to ensure data security and protect personal privacy and commercial secrets by leveraging cutting-edge digital technologies such as blockchain.

China's total data output reached 32.85 zettabytes in 2023, an increase of 22.4 percent year-on-year, while the added value of core digital economy industries accounted for 10 percent of GDP, according to the National Data Administration.

The top regulator has unveiled

a guideline to expand the application scenarios of data elements in 12 key fields such as industrial manufacturing, modern agriculture, trade circulation, transportation and financial services.

Lee Xiaodong, founder and CEO of Fuxi Institution, a domestic consultancy focusing on the internet and the digital economy, said at the forum that the utilization of data elements in the country is still in its initial stages and the immense value of data is yet to be fully tapped.

China has unveiled a set of accounting rules for corporate data resources. According to the Ministry of Finance, corporate data can be classified as "intangible assets" when it meets relevant requirements in accounting standards, while data held for sale in daily business activities can be recognized as inventory.

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the China Center for Internet Economy Research at Central University of Finance and Economics, said, "With the rapid development of the data elements market, an increasing number of enterprises

have attached great importance to the accumulation, development and application of data assets, and begun to incorporate data into their balance sheets to better reflect the real value and asset status of enterprises."

Data elements have the attributes of commodities, which could be effectively allocated through market evaluation and trading, in order to create huge economic and social value, Ouyang said.

More efforts should be made to promote the confirmation of data-related rights as well as explore a data pricing mechanism and value assessment system, in order to give full play to the value of data and boost the development of the country's digital economy, he added.

Statistics from the National Industrial Information Security Development Research Center show that revenue derived from China's data elements market is projected to rise to 198.9 billion yuan (\$27.4 billion) in 2025, with the compound annual growth rate surpassing 25 percent during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period.

China, US start new round of panda ties

By YAN DONGJIE yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

Giant pandas Yun Chuan and Xin Bao set out on their journey to the United States on Wednesday evening, marking a new round of China-US cooperation on the conservation of the protected species.

A vehicle carrying the bears departed from the Ya'an Bifengxia Base of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Sichuan province. They will board a chartered flight from Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport to San Diego, California.

The pandas are accompanied by five experienced caretakers and veterinary experts from China and the US. To ensure the health and safety of the animals during the long-haul flight, Chinese experts have provided food, such as fresh bamboo, bamboo shoots, fruits, vegetables and specially made bread, and drinking water.

After Yun Chuan and Xin Bao settle in at the San Diego Zoo, Chinese experts will stay there for about three months to see them through the quarantine period, helping them to quickly adapt to their new living environment. Panda enthusiasts in both China and the US will have various means of learning about the pair's daily lives and adjustment process, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

Since the 1990s, China has collaborated on giant panda conservation with 26 institutions in 20 countries, including the US, Spain, Japan and France.

The San Diego Zoo was one of the first institutions in the US to engage in cooperative research on giant pandas with China. Over more than 20 years, the two sides have cooperated and solved a series of technical challenges in key areas such as captive panda breeding, habitat protection and panda supplemental nutrition, according to the Sichuan center.

On the same day that Yun Chuan and Xin Bao set out for the US, the China Wildlife Conservation Association and the Schoenbrunn Zoo in Vienna, Austria, signed an agreement on a new round of international cooperation on giant panda conservation. This means another pair of pandas will move to the European country, initiating a 10-year international cooperation on giant panda conservation.

Giant pandas Yuan Yuan and Yang Yang, who are currently in Austria, will return to China once the previous cooperation agreement expires this year. Austria will renovate the Vienna zoo's panda enclosure and make other necessary arrangements to welcome the new pair to a more comfortable and safer living environment.

To ensure the well-being of the giant pandas, Chinese experts visited Austria at the start of this year and provided technical guidance on venue preparations, specifying standards for panda enclosure facilities, feeding management, food supply, healthcare and other requirements.

The China Wildlife Conservation Association and the Schoenbrunn Zoo, which is renowned as one of the most beautiful zoos in Europe, started their first phase of cooperation in 2003, with the arrival of giant pandas Yang Yang and Long Hui at the zoo. The pair set a European record by mating naturally and breeding four times to become the parents of five cubs.

Over the past two decades, both sides have achieved fruitful results in giant panda conservation, breeding, scientific research, technical exchanges, personnel training and public education, according to the Sichuan center.

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CHINA

Navigating college admissions another challenge for students

Advisory services boom as parents and applicants face new anxiety

By ZHAO YIMENG
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China's grueling national college entrance exam, the *gaokao*, may have concluded, but the pressure is far from over.

As scores for the all-important exam become available nationwide, students and their parents find themselves facing a new source of tension — navigating the complex university application process.

The race for coveted university spots has fueled a booming market for college application advisory services.

Even before the exam concluded earlier this month, the high demand for application services was evident. A service priced at 17,999 yuan (\$2,480) offered by Zhang Xuefeng, an influential online education adviser, sold out in three hours during a livestream. Anxious parents flooded the live-stream with questions about applying to suitable majors and universities based on their children's preferences and performance.

According to iiMedia Research, the market for *gaokao* application services in China reached 880 million yuan in 2022 and around 950 million yuan last year. China has over 1,850 companies involved in "university application services", with 80.4 percent established in the past five years, according to database query platform TianYan-Cha.com.

A college application adviser in Henan province surnamed Xu, who spoke to the Yitiao social media platform, said that while advisers require few professional qualifications, they must have extensive knowledge of admission procedures and university plans.

Xu, an adviser with 10 years of experience, said he provides targeted suggestions based on exam performance and career preferences, rather than recommending specific majors, to help clients avoid pitfalls and irrational trends.

Even though they meet the needs of many students and parents, concerns have been raised about the quality of services provided by some institutions with limited educational expertise. The concerns include potentially unprofessional advice and misguided recommendations during a crucial decision-making period.

The Ministry of Education recently disclosed various fraudulent cases involving people posing as college application experts and conducting scams under the guise of consulting. Some institutions claimed "100 percent guaranteed admission" or promised to "not waste a point", but then encouraged students to apply to colleges or programs with lower cutoff scores to inflate their success rates.

Chen Jiankun, the founder of ChatEDU, an online education con-



Students and parents visit a college admission consultation fair at Nanjing No 9 Middle School in Jiangsu province on Tuesday. The event was attended by nearly 80 universities from across the country, including Nanjing University, Nankai University and Tianjin University. LIU LI / FOR CHINA DAILY

sultancy tool, advised students to be cautious and not blindly trust institutions or consultants. He emphasized the importance of understanding one's personality and career plans.

ChatEDU is a free AI-powered tool that provides tailored college application plans based on algorithms and data. Users input information such as their province, chosen subjects and *gaokao* scores. The tool then offers "high risk", "safe" and "guaranteed" recommendations for universities and majors, explaining the reasons behind each suggestion.

Users can also inquire about specific schools or majors and request recommendations within a particular region or field.

ChatEDU has reviewed all pub-

lic undergraduate institutions and majors, focusing on regular universities and newly established majors to address students' concerns.

"Providing students with free college application consulting can bridge their information gap and help them find the most suitable universities and majors," Chen said, highlighting the importance of offering equal educational resources to students from disadvantaged families.

Wang Changbin, the father of an examinee in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, decided against using any agency for his daughter's college applications due to the high prices and varying quality of services.

"I don't think it's necessary to get involved in the anxiety raised by

the competitive environment," he said. "There's enough time to make choices after *gaokao* scores come out."

On Monday night, his daughter Wang Ziyu checked her results, and they plan to fill out her college application using a free information service system launched by the Ministry of Education.

The system, accessible through the "Sunshine Gaokao" platform on the Smart Education of China website, integrates extensive data on university admissions and employment prospects. It aims to assist students by providing reliable and comprehensive resources for choosing their academic paths.

Wang Xiaoyu contributed to this story.

Judicial system steps up fight against drug abuse

By YANG ZEKUN
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China's judicial system is stepping up efforts to combat drug abuse, with a particular focus on emerging threats of narcotic and psychotropic substances, and the protection of minors.

According to the Supreme People's Procuratorate, from January last year to May this year, procuratorates nationwide approved the arrests of over 61,000 people for such crimes, a 14 percent year-on-year decrease, and prosecuted over 65,000 individuals, down 33 percent.

However, Deputy Procurator-General Chen Guoqing highlighted the rise of new narcotics and psychotropic medications used as substitutes for traditional drugs. These substances, often disguised and marketed in various forms, pose a serious health risk, especially to young people.

Yuan Ming, director of the top procuratorate's major crimes department, acknowledged the challenge of new drugs. He said some medical professionals illegally prescribe or divert controlled substances, while drug traffickers utilize online platforms and logistics networks, further complicating enforcement.

Yuan highlighted the need for targeted prevention campaigns to raise awareness and protect minors from falling victim to drug abuse.

"Due to a lack of self-control and discernment, young people are easily lured, incited and deceived by criminals into drug abuse and trafficking, especially with new types of drugs," he said.

"This poses a significant social threat and requires increased vigilance."

The top procuratorate cited a recent case involving a man surnamed Liu who sold e-cigarettes containing Etomidate, a newly controlled substance, to minors. Liu received a three-and-a-half-year prison sentence and a fine for drug trafficking and enabling drug use by minors.

Li Ruiyi, chief judge of the No 5 Criminal Adjudication Tribunal at the Supreme People's Court, emphasized stricter punishments for those who target minors with drugs, particularly those used to facilitate crimes like rape and robbery. He also noted a concerning rise in drug-related crimes committed by minors themselves.

The top court highlighted a significant increase in cases involving minors selling or transporting drugs, with 301 such cases handled between January and May.

Ouyang Nanping, deputy chief judge of the tribunal, emphasized the need to address the root causes of drug abuse.

He called for preventive measures and collaboration with relevant authorities to tighten regulations and prevent the misuse of controlled substances.

Youth camp explores Flying Tigers' history

By ZHAO YIMENG
and LI YINGQING

A unique summer camp program launched in Beijing this week aims to foster cultural exchange and historical understanding between youth from the United States and China.

The Chinese Bridge Flying Tigers Summer Camp is welcoming 70 students and teachers from the US for a two-week exploration of China's history and its wartime partnership with the US.

The camp centers around the story of the Flying Tigers, a group of US volunteer pilots who fought alongside Chinese forces during World War II.

The pilots, officially known as the American Volunteer Group of the Chinese Air Force, played a critical role in defending China against Japanese aggression from 1941 to 1942. Their bravery and expertise earned them the iconic nickname "Flying Tigers" from the Chinese people.

The summer camp, organized by the Ministry of Education's Center for Language Education and Cooperation, opened on Monday and is scheduled to close on July 7.

Participants will embark on cultural and historical tours in Beijing and Southwest China's Yunnan province for two weeks, visiting scenic spots and museums to learn about the real China and Sino-American military and civilian cooperation during World War II.

Jeffrey Greene, chairman of the Sino-American Aviation Heritage Foundation, encouraged the US students to share their experiences and their feelings for Chinese people with their friends when they return to the US.

"While they are here, they will

learn the history of Flying Tigers and how important the story is for Chinese people," he said when delivering a speech at the summer camp's opening ceremony.

Lesly Ibarra, a student at the University of Texas at Austin and a member of the summer camp, said she applied for the program because she had never been to a country that is so far from home and is interested in Chinese culture.

"We know a lot about Flying Tigers because they united with the Chinese Army to help during World War II. I think it's really important to keep the friendship, and we are here to represent that and keep the connection," she said.

Marco Yerena, a student from Rivera Early College High School in Texas, said he was amazed by the story of Flying Tigers told by Greene during the speech because their curriculum did not cover that part of the history, which is significant for both China and the US.

"After hearing the brief history of the Flying Tigers, I was amazed about how Chinese people really hold on to the spirit and carry it," Yerena said.

Before the opening ceremony, participants in the summer camp experienced traditional Chinese culture such as paper cutting and playing chess with Chinese counterparts from Beijing Bayi School.

The US students are the first group to visit China under the Chinese Bridge Flying Tigers summer camp program, Greene said.

Jointly organized by the center, the foundation and Yunnan Normal University, the summer camps are expected to invite 100 American students to China each year over the next five years.

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Students and teachers from the US explore Beijing on Wednesday during the two-week Chinese Bridge Flying Tigers Summer Camp. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Gaokao taker urged to lower sights after 16th attempt

By LIANG SHUANG
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Two people who have taken China's national college entrance exam, known as the *gaokao* in Chinese, more than a dozen times received mixed results this year.

Tang Shangjun, who took the test for a 16th time, scored more than 600 points out of 750 and plans to apply for a top-tier teachers' school in Beijing. But Liang Shi, who sat for a 28th time, got 446 points and fell short of his target once more.

Tang, who took the *gaokao* in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, said in a livestreaming session on Tuesday that he scored "more than 600 points", although he did not reveal the exact score to avoid "complicating admission matters". He said he would probably apply for Beijing Normal Uni-

versity, or other teachers' schools.

He scored 594 points last year and applied for Huazhong Normal University, but was denied admission after he refused to be reallocated to other majors when the ones he preferred were filled by higher-scoring candidates.

In previous years, he had been admitted by universities including Xiamen University, Guangxi University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University, but he turned them all down because he was fixated on entering Beijing's prestigious Tsinghua University.

Sun Chenghou, a senior adviser for the Hengshui Education Group in Hebei province who sponsored Tang's studies during the past year at a high school affiliated with the group, told Tide News that Tang's obsession was partly due to his limited knowledge, as he was unaware that you can apply to change your

major in college, and that it would be slightly easier to apply for elite universities as a postgraduate if one really has the gift.

Sun said Tang had kept a low profile for the past year, and had studied in Hengshui under a pseudonym. He and other teachers had helped Tang "untangle" his obsession with Tsinghua, and set Beijing Normal University as a more realistic target. He added that he would persuade Tang to accept being reassigned if his score fell short of his intended major.

He said he would arrange a part-time teaching job for Tang if he goes to college, and that the group would offer him a full-time job after he graduates.

Since 1983, Liang has sat for the exam as long as he was eligible and had time. He even took the test together with his son in 2011. However, he never scored enough, or

even got close, to making it to his dream school — Sichuan University.

Before the test this year, he said it would be his last attempt, as the form of the exam will change next year and he feared there would be "too many uncertainties".

His score this year was 11 short of the threshold needed to go to a second-tier university in the province, let alone first-tier Sichuan University.

"It was progress from last year's 424, but it makes no difference," he told Xinhuanaghe, the Jinan Times' news website. "I can't say what will happen next year, and don't ask me."

China's education authorities canceled the age cap of 25 for the *gaokao* in 2001, allowing anyone with a high school diploma to sit the exam. However, some schools and majors still apply age limits when processing admissions.

CHINA

‘Hellscape’ remarks send ‘dangerous signal’

Admiral’s words show that US would destroy Taiwan for its own interests

By ZHANG YI
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The Chinese mainland said on Wednesday that the true intention of the United States is to destroy Taiwan for its own interests, after a top US admiral claimed that the US plans to turn the Taiwan Strait into “hellscape” if the mainland “invades” the island.

The US plans to deploy thousands of drones in the Taiwan Strait in an

operation called “Hellscape” to ensure that any attempt by the mainland to “invade” Taiwan does not succeed, US Indo-Pacific commander Admiral Samuel Paparo told The Washington Post recently.

Paparo was quoted as saying on the sidelines of the recent Shangri-La Dialogue defense forum in Singapore that the “Hellscape” strategy would involve deploying thousands of uncrewed submarines, surface vessels and aerial vehicles around

Taiwan to buy Washington and its partners time to assemble a response.

Urging the US to stop interfering in the Taiwan question, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said at a news conference in Beijing on Wednesday that the Taiwan question is China’s internal affair and it does not tolerate any external interference.

She criticized anti-China forces in the US for hyping up the so-called plan to destroy Taiwan in the past and for now promoting turning the Taiwan Strait into a “hell”, saying the acts sent a highly dangerous signal, exposing

the true intention of the US to destroy Taiwan at all costs for its own interests.

Zhu urged the US to abide by the one-China principle and the provisions of the three Sino-US joint communiques, calling for an end to sending any wrong signals to the separatist forces seeking “Taiwan independence”.

She condemned the Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan for serving as pawns for external forces seeking to use Taiwan to contain the mainland, warning that they are leading Taiwan into a dangerous situation.

“The attempts to seek ‘independ-

ence’ by relying on the US or through military means are a dead end that will only bring grave danger to Taiwan’s people,” she added.

Zhu also condemned the recent decision by the US to sell approximately \$360 million worth of arms to Taiwan, saying that the repeated arms sales by the US are aimed at directing the flames of war toward Taiwan, showing malicious intent.

She called on the DPP authorities to immediately cease actions that harm the vital interests of the people of Taiwan and to stop activities that jeopardize peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Intellectual property talent pool bolstered in China

By CAO YIN
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China’s intellectual property workforce has grown significantly, with the number of professionals reaching 860,000 by the end of last year, up more than 24 percent from late 2020 and highlighting the country’s commitment to fostering a robust IP ecosystem.

Zhang Zhicheng, head of the China National Intellectual Property Administration’s personnel department, announced the figures at a news conference on Tuesday. He highlighted growth across various IP fields, including protection, application, public service and international affairs, since 2021.

Over 30,000 people are now responsible for IP-related administrative management and law enforcement, while the number of patent attorneys has grown to 76,000.

The number of IP specialists in enterprises, universities and research institutions has also grown substantially. This surge is expected to accelerate the effective utilization of IP assets, driving innovation and economic growth.

860,000 professionals

were engaged in the intellectual property sector by the end of last year.

To navigate the complexities of global IP, China has trained around 270 people as international patent examiners. Over 150 educators specializing in international IP affairs and 119 experts equipped to handle overseas IP disputes have also been strategically selected.

Experts from emerging fields like big data, artificial intelligence and new materials are joining the country’s IP think tanks, strengthening IP protection for innovators in cutting-edge sectors.

Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong province have emerged as hubs for IP talent development. The three regions boast frequent talent exchanges and streamlined pathways for IP professionals. As a testament to their success, by the end of last year, the number of high-value invention patents per 10,000 people in the three regions was more than twice the national average.

China’s commitment to IP talent cultivation is reflected in its global innovation ranking. According to the 2023 World Intellectual Property Organization’s Global Innovation Index, China leads the world with 24 science and technology clusters in the top 100. The Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai-Suzhou clusters rank second, fourth and fifth, respectively.

While celebrating the achievements, officials acknowledge the ongoing need for education and training in the IP field.

Tsinghua University and the World Intellectual Property Organization signed an agreement in November to establish a new master’s program in intellectual property and innovation policy at the university’s Law School.

The English-language program aims to enroll around 30 students from home and abroad, focusing on cultivating high-level IP professionals with a global vision. The first students are scheduled to begin their studies in September.

Zhou Guangquan, president of the Law School, said the program will feature top-tier faculty from the university, WIPO, government agencies, courts, other colleges, multinational corporations and law firms.

“It’s dedicated to educating outstanding international IP talent for both China and the broader global community,” he said.

Telecom fraudsters target younger generation

By YANG ZEKUN
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While overall telecom fraud is showing signs of decline, younger people remain especially vulnerable, according to a new report by the Ministry of Public Security.

Statistics from last year reveal that the average telecom fraud victim is just 37 years old. People aged 18 to 40 constitute 62.1 percent of all victims, with those aged 41 to 65 making up 33.1 percent.

The ministry released the report following a monthlong nationwide fraud awareness campaign. Despite progress in curbing such crimes, authorities emphasized the need for continued vigilance, particularly among the young.

The report highlights the diverse methods employed by fraudsters. Ten types of telecom fraud, including click-farm jobs, false online investment and financial management, and counterfeit shopping services, collectively accounted for nearly 88.4 percent of reported cases.

The ministry encouraged citizens to be cautious of unsolicited investment opportunities, to verify information through official channels, and report suspicious activity to mitigate the risk of becoming a victim.

From the start of last year to May this year, approximately 543,000 telecom fraud cases were resolved across China. Anti-fraud authorities have issued 420 million warnings to potential victims and have intercepted fraudulent funds totaling 452 billion yuan (\$62.3 billion).

Leading the list of prevalent scams are click-farm scams, which often target students and people on low incomes with promises of quick earnings through online tasks before

demanding payments. In one case from March last year, a man surnamed Cao from Jiangsu province was lured into a WeChat group where members engaged in click-farming, which uses clicks or false orders to hype up popularity of e-commerce shops.

Upon joining, Cao witnessed members sharing payment receipt screenshots and, guided by the group administrator, engaged in click-farm jobs. After completing tasks, Cao was informed by the administrator that he needed to complete four orders before he could withdraw commissions.

Following instructions, Cao increased his investments as requested. The administrator then used excuses like “operational errors” and “account frozen” to deceive Cao into transferring a total of 420,000 yuan into an account. Cao realized he had been deceived when the promised commissions failed to materialize.

False investment and financial products pose another significant threat, targeting individuals with certain income levels or assets, such as singles or those interested in investment and stock trading. Fraudsters use online platforms and various channels to disseminate investment information, posing as investment experts to gain victims’ trust.

Victims are persuaded to make small investments through fake websites or apps, promising profits and urging continuous investment. When substantial sums have been invested, fraudsters fabricate reasons to deny withdrawals.

Online romance scams also play a role, with fraudsters gaining victims’ trust before deceiving them through financial schemes. In one instance, a victim from Anhui province lost 1.4 million yuan to her online “boyfriend” in a romance scam.



Malaysian exhibitors put on a show at their booth at the Eighth China-Eurasia Expo in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Wednesday. LI XIONGXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Nation committed to Eurasian cooperation

By ZHANG TING in Urumqi
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China reiterated its commitment to deepening economic cooperation with Eurasian countries at the opening ceremony of the Eighth China-Eurasia Expo in Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Wednesday.

Gao Yunlong, a vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, highlighted China’s ongoing efforts to broaden areas of cooperation and elevate the quality of partnerships with Eurasian economies. He emphasized the role of Xin-

jiang as a key player in that strategy.

“As a golden corridor between Asia and Europe and a bridgehead for China’s westward opening, Xinjiang has made positive progress in promoting the construction of the core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt in recent years,” Gao said. “The Xinjiang Pilot Free Trade Zone has been launched, and cooperation with Eurasian countries, especially Central Asian countries, has become increasingly extensive.”

Representatives from participating countries expressed optimism about the potential of the expo, which brings together businesses and government officials from across the region.

Urmat Takirov, director of the

Kyrgyz Export Center run by Kyrgyzstan’s Ministry of Economy and Commerce, highlighted its significance.

“This is a good opportunity for us to promote our products to the Chinese market through Xinjiang,” Takirov said. “Xinjiang is located in the connecting position of Central Asian countries and China. In the near future, Xinjiang can play a bigger role in advancing relations between China and Eurasia.”

Daria Vereschagina, an exhibitor from Uzbekistan, highlighted Xinjiang’s strategic importance. “Xinjiang plays an important role as a land bridge, and we hope to carry our art products through freight trains more easily,” Vereschagina said.



Gently does it

Experts open the reentry capsule of the Chang’e 6 lunar probe at the China Academy of Space Technology in Beijing on Wednesday. The probe, carrying samples taken from the far side of the moon, landed in North China’s Inner Mongolia autonomous region on Tuesday. JIN LIWANG / XINHUA

Suspects returned from Vietnam

Vietnamese police recently transferred 19 Chinese suspected of involvement in cross-border telecom fraud in Vietnam to China, along with related items, the Ministry of Public Security announced on Wednesday.

The ministry has deployed police from Liaoning province to escort the suspects back and investigate the case.

Chinese police identified clues indicating the existence of dens in Vietnam engaged in cross-border telecom fraud against Chinese citizens.

Acting on information provided by

Chinese police, Vietnamese police dismantled five telecom fraud dens in Ho Chi Minh City, arresting 19 Chinese suspects and seizing tools used in the commission of the crimes, including computers and mobile phones.

The Chinese and Vietnamese public security ministries have intensified law enforcement cooperation since their eighth joint ministerial meeting in September, advancing efforts to combat cross-border telecom fraud crimes, the Chinese ministry said.

YANG ZEKUN

Experts highlight indisputable South China Sea sovereignty

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou
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Scholars reiterated China’s historical claims to the islands in the South China Sea at a workshop in Haikou, Hainan province, on Tuesday, asserting that the country has held indisputable sovereignty over the territories since ancient times.

Wang Sheng, president of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, said that successive Chinese governments have included the South China Sea islands in their maps and carried out sovereignty activities, such as astronomical surveys and military patrols. The actions are documented in local historical records, official maps and government archives spanning Chinese history.

“During the Qin and Han dynas-

ties (221 BC-220 AD), the Chinese people commenced navigation in the South China Sea. Through long-term practical endeavors, they discovered and developed the South China Sea islands,” Wang said, citing various historical documents and archaeological findings, including a manual of sea routes created by Chinese fishermen.

Wang also pointed to Western navigational documents, maps, nautical charts and national archives from modern times, which he said provide evidence of China’s historical development, utilization and governance of the South China Sea islands.

However, Wang noted that in recent years, certain claimant countries around the South China Sea and external powers have distorted historical facts, selectively interpret-

ed international law, and intentionally concealed the truth to deny China’s sovereignty and rights in the region.

Wu Shicun, chairman of the Huayang Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance, emphasized the importance of historical context on the South China Sea issue. He called for a comprehensive and systematic study of the region’s history, guided by factual evidence and the restoration of historical truths.

Wu stressed the need for interdisciplinary integration in advancing historical research on the South China Sea, particularly combining history and legal studies. He advocated a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating fields such as international relations, political science and oceanography, to make significant

strides in understanding the South China Sea issue.

From 2011 to 2018, Anthony Carty, an Irish professor of international law and honorary visiting professor at Peking University’s Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, examined archives from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the national archives of the United Kingdom and the United States.

Carty reported that archives from the UK, France and China collectively provide reliable historical and legal evidence supporting China’s sovereignty over the South China Sea islands. He noted that both British and French records strongly support China’s claims to the Xisha and Nansha Islands.

“The British archives support the Chinese claims to the Nansha Islands,” Carty said. “They use pri-

marily the evidence that the Chinese have treated the islands as part of their homeland, for fishing and economic activities, and for habitation.”

French records affirm Chinese activities in the area and deny that any French activities made of the islands were on behalf of Vietnam, which was under French colonial rule, he added.

Carty also highlighted the geopolitical context surrounding the South China Sea issue, noting that US records indicate alignment with the French and British viewpoints.

“American records suggest that the Philippines, a key ally of the US, lacks legitimate claims to the disputed islands,” he said. “This indicates that the US stance on Philippine claims forms part of a containment strategy against China.”

CHINA

Chongqing night school provides life lessons

CHONGQING — Southwest China's Chongqing has long been renowned for its bustling and lively nightlife, with restaurants, bars, clubs and shops open until the early hours of the morning.

However, a new “quieter” lifestyle has recently emerged in the city, as young people choose to head back to school for night classes.

As one of the exemplary urban renewal programs in Chongqing, the “campus at night”, also known as the Cooperation Units, is not a real school. Instead, it is a creative and cultural park renovated from a factory complex built in the 1950s.

The night school works as a bridge linking shops in the park with students and customers. This is because shops in the park double as night school classrooms, and some shop owners are even teachers.

In one coffee shop named City Walk, young barista Wang Haoran is not only an employee, but also a latte art teacher at the night school.

“Teaching students at night is quite time-consuming and exhausting for sure, but sharing coffee knowledge with people from all walks of life is also meaningful,” said Wang.

Even though Chongqing has a long-standing tea culture, coffee culture has recently been booming here. In addition to having thousands of coffee shops, Chongqing has also held coffee festivals for several years.

Just next to the coffee shop, a pottery art shop is also a classroom that has trained more than 100 night school students. The shelf set at the door's entrance displays all kinds of student pottery products such as vases, plates and figurines.

“After I quit my job, I opened the pottery art shop here because this old factory complex exudes a tranquil, soothing vibe. Our shop was among the first to join the night class program,” said Yanzi (pseudonym), the shop owner.

She added that to her surprise, many people are interested in this art. She finds it meaningful that her shop is not just a spiritual habitat for her, but also a potential window for young people to learn about traditional culture.

In addition to serving as characteristic classroom settings, other shops in the park also provide a space for outside teachers. Chunxiao (pseudonym), a Korean language teacher, works as a college teacher during the day and comes to a shop to teach Korean language, public speaking and other courses at night.

“I can feel night school students have stronger interest in learning. Also, some treat it as a good social opportunity,” said Chunxiao. His wife is also a teacher at the night school and his cousin is a student here.

Since October, the Cooperation Units has launched over 100 courses ranging from acting to calligraphy, and attracted more than 4,000 students with both favorable prices and quality content.

“Without the night school, I would lie on the sofa and watch short videos at the end of the day. The night school is a great nutrient in young people's daily lives, making them feel both relaxed and purposeful,” said a student participating in the Korean language class. “If I have more time in the future, I will surely sign up for more classes.”

Wang Chao, head of the Cooperation Units, said that the building complex had been open for more than two years, but before the night school boom, few knew about it. Now, the night school is a good model that not only brings vibrancy to the local community, but also helps deepen genuine connections among young people.

XINHUA



Zhang Zhijuan checks a child's teeth at a clinic in Gaofa village in Dali Bai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Rural doctor strives to boost health in villages

‘Like a tortoise’, Zhang Zhijuan who can speak four dialects has slowly crafted a career serving patients in Yunnan

By WANG XIAOYU

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Zhang Zhijuan, a rural doctor in Yunnan province, speaks four ethnic dialects and is entrusted to not only manage illnesses but also mediate disputes between villagers.

As versatile and competent as she is, Zhang only sees herself as a tortoise inching toward the goal of advancing the health of local residents in her hometown of Gaofa village in Dali Bai autonomous prefecture.

“I love medical science, but I am not smart and could not afford a formal education growing up. So over the years, I have been learning like a tortoise and improving myself at a slow but steady pace,” the 50-year-old said.

Zhang's passion for medicine stems from her father's abrupt death when she was 13 years old. “I was driven by a very simple goal — to help patients, especially those living in remote and mountainous areas like my father,” she said.

The kindness of fellow villagers was imprinted in her memory.

“I remember them helping my mom do farmwork and gifting clothing and food to us in the most difficult times, which cemented my determination to be a doctor and cure illnesses for them when I grew up.”

In 1994, Zhang graduated from a nursing program at a prefecture-level vocational high school and immediately returned to the village to work at the rural clinic.

As one of the three workers at the clinic meant to serve about 2,000 residents nearby, Zhang has an all-encompassing job. She visits pregnant women at home to check their conditions and deliver babies, shares health knowledge with villagers — especially with children and the elderly — and sometimes accompanies sick patients to seek treatment at larger hospitals and help them apply for subsidies.



Zhang treats a senior resident of the village.

Gaofa is home to five indigenous ethnic groups. Local officials said that only 3 percent of local villagers can speak four dialects like Zhang.

“Many villagers live deep in the mountains and very far away from urban hospitals. It is very inconvenient for them to travel outside the area, so I have decided to come back and help them as much as possible,” she said. “My goal is to help them spend the least amount of money on medical treatment and prevent minor ailments from developing into severe diseases.”

Although Zhang was trained in Western medicine, she has always been fascinated by ethnic practices.

“When I was young, I often saw seniors in the village steeping plantains in water and adding sugar or honey to them, and they would use the concoction to treat urinary tract infections,” she said.

Zhang learned a little about traditional Chinese medicine at the vocational school and gradually applied her skills and knowledge to aid ailing local farmers.

“Many villagers make a living through farming and suffer from arthritis and pain in their lower backs and legs,” she said. “So acupuncture and TCM massage are very useful and have quickly gained popularity among them.”

In July 2019, Zhang earned an opportunity to enroll in a TCM training program in the Dali prefecture because of her experience offering TCM treatment in rural areas.

“I was the only rural doctor in the class, and my classmates were either college students or senior doctors at larger hospitals,” she said. “I could not even speak Mandarin fluently.”

Zhang said that she overcame her shyness and intimidation by partnering with a young student around her son's age.

“He helped me summarize one day's worth of teaching into bullet points so that I could memorize things more easily and communicate with fellow classmates the next day,” she said. “Gradually, I became accustomed to talking with others in a relaxed way and refined my skills.”

The program not only introduced more advanced TCM treatment tools to Zhang, but also led her to reaffirm her conviction to increase their use in her hometown.

In late April, Zhang was awarded the May 1 Labor Medal by the All-China Federation of Trade Union. A total of 1,088 such medals were granted to worker models and organizations nationwide.

At 50 years old, Zhang said that she has set a new goal for her work — to prioritize disease prevention and health promotion.

“I hope that villagers will not only visit me when they feel sick, but also learn how to boost their immunity and build a healthy lifestyle,” she said.

Old millet given modern twists in Inner Mongolia

HOHHOT — From delicious mooncakes and crispy snacks to millet-themed museums, Aohan Banner in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region — known for discovering the world's oldest millet — is transforming this ancient grain into trendy, modern products.

According to Ma Lin, a resident of Aohan, millet was traditionally used in porridge and other recipes, but now it's in mooncakes, which is a very new practice.

“My family and friends love them,” Ma said.

Ma is among a growing number of health-conscious Chinese consumers who increasingly favor coarse grains such as millet, sorghum, black rice and buckwheat over refined grains such as white wheat and polished rice.

This shift has presented enticing opportunities for companies in Aohan Banner. Two years ago, Inner Mongolia Huixiangyuan Food Co started developing millet mooncakes.

“We encountered various challenges, including selecting the right millet variety and refining the milling process,” said Zhang Fengying, manager of the company. “After years of efforts, we successfully launched our millet mooncakes.”

The mooncakes have become popular as more people become aware of the nutritional value of millet, which is often referred to as a “coarse cereal” due to the rough surface of the seeds, Zhang said.

In addition to mooncakes, Aohan Agricultural Millet Industrial Development Group Co has collaborated with experts from Nankai University in Tianjin to develop a millet powder believed to restore acid-alkaline balance. In recent years, the company has launched over 80 millet products.

Beyond the development of new items, new business models centered around millet are emerging.

Restaurants and rural homestays featuring millet cuisine have become hotspots. The Aohan Millet Museum, which displays 8,000-year-old carbonized millet grains and over 500 ancient farming tools, has been a major tourist destination since its opening in 2020, receiving over 300,000 visitors so far.

“Visiting the millet museum was a fascinating experience,” said Chen Cailing, a local resident. “It's amazing to see the history and the innovative ways millet is being used today.”

The local government has rolled out various measures to ensure the high-quality development of the millet industry. They include preserving traditional varieties, screening for high-yield, high-quality new varieties and documenting traditional farming practices and local cus-

oms related to millet.

Acknowledging the historical significance of millet, the Aohan dryland farming system was designated as one of the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2012. Two years later, Aohan was designated China's “hometown of millet”.

“During prehistoric times, Aohan millet served as a staple food for northern Chinese ancestors before spreading westward,” said Liu Guoxiang, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of History. “It has unique cultural and agricultural value.”

At present, Aohan's millet cultivation area covers approximately 66,700 hectares, with an annual output of around 300 million kilograms. The millet industry, involving nearly 80,000 farming households, has already become a cash cow for local residents.

Wang Yuzhuo, a local villager, established a rural cooperative in 2013. Last year, Wang began promoting millet via livestreaming and received 1,000 orders in just 30 minutes during his first session. To date, he has filled 28,000 orders, amounting to 1.2 million yuan (\$168,800) in sales.

In the future, Aohan plans to continue its innovative approaches, combining traditional practices with modern techniques to further enhance the millet industry and strengthen its place in the market.

“For nearly 8,000 years, millet cultivation has been continuous in Aohan Banner,” said Zhang Hongfeng, director of the banner's agriculture and animal husbandry bureau.

“Today, it not only supports local livelihoods but also stands as a symbol of the region. Despite the passage of time, Aohan millet continues to thrive, embodying the vibrant spirit of agricultural heritage and innovation.”

In many regions of China, local specialties have evolved into iconic industries.

In Liuzhou, an industrial city in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region renowned for steel and automobile manufacturing, exports of *huosifen*, a noodle soup known for its pungent aroma, surpassed 3,167 metric tons last year, up 19.4 percent year-on-year. The total value of the exports was 87.27 million yuan, a 28.5 percent increase compared to the previous year.

In Shanxi province, a region that has been making vinegar for over 3,000 years, mature vinegar is exported to over 30 countries and regions, including the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan.

XINHUA



A farmer harvests millet in Aohan Banner, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. LIU LEI / XINHUA

Passion fruit ripens prosperity in Fujian

FUZHOU — Luo Qiliang was recently pleased to see his orchard full of vitality, with passion fruit vines producing lush foliage and climbing trellises.

This is the eighth year that Luo has grown passion fruit in his home county of Wuping in the city of Longyan, Fujian province.

“I planted more than 4 hectares of passion fruit, with an average profit of about 225,000 yuan (\$31,052) per hectare last year,” he said.

Located in a mountainous area, Wuping has less than 0.07 hectares of arable land per capita, and local farmers previously

earned a living by planting cash crops and raising pigs.

However, small-scale pig breeding has caused pollution in the surrounding rivers. Around 2014, the local government began encouraging farmers to change their livelihoods and start planting passion fruit.

Wuping's climate, which features ample sunshine and abundant rainfall, is suitable for growing golden passion fruit, a popular variety in the market, according to Lin Wenming from the county's agriculture and rural affairs bureau.

“So we organized farmers to visit major passion fruit producing areas such as the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Hainan province and started to plant the fruit,” Lin said.

Wuping's passion fruits are of high quality and have proved popular in the market, a fact that has encouraged the rapid development of the industry in the county. Eight standardized seedling-raising bases have been built in the county, along with more than 30 fruit processing centers, forming a complete industrial chain.

Last year, the county's passion

fruit planting area amounted to 1,920 hectares, with an output of 35,000 metric tons.

“The river used to be quite dirty and smelly, but now it's clear,” Lin said, while noting that this is a result of the county developing its industry in line with local requirements.

Wuping's passion fruit industry is also riding the wave of e-commerce. According to Wang Xiuzhen, head of Fujian Youxuan Agricultural Development, a local enterprise specializing in planting and selling passion fruit, the company saw its fruit orders on e-commerce platform Alibaba exceed 200,000 in a single day last year, hitting a record.

According to Wang, the compa-

ny has also introduced more production lines to turn out additional products, including dried fruit and yogurt.

“Passion fruit can be made into biological feed, and it also has medicinal value, representing its huge potential market,” Wang added.

In recent years, the local government has made efforts to promote the Wuping passion fruit brand by monitoring the production process to ensure quality. Related events have been organized to boost local tourism, promoting the integrated development of primary, secondary and tertiary industries.

XINHUA

Editor's note: As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.

Giant pandas rack up air miles

Overseas cooperation assists in conservation, breeding of protected species

By YAN DONGJIE
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Huang Shan always carries some apples and carrots with him when he flies with giant pandas, as he knows they like sweet snacks.

As a giant panda breeder at the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Wolong, Sichuan province, Huang has accompanied giant pandas on flights to countries such as Thailand, Japan, Singapore and Finland in the past decade. This month, he'll fly with Yun Chuan and Xin Bao to San Diego in the United States.

"We usually prepare bamboo, bamboo shoots and special steamed bread for the pandas on the plane. The snacks are for comforting them if they get anxious," Huang said.

Even before they board the flight, Yuan Chuan and Xin Bao have had to go through more than two months of quarantine, and Huang has been alongside them every step of the way to provide compassionate care and behavioral training.

"Through compassionate care, which means I stay with them every day, feeding and interacting with them, the pandas become more familiar with me and trust me more. This means that when I accompany them to go abroad, I can help them get used to the new environment, food and new breeders easier," he said.

The well-being of China's giant pandas overseas is a great concern of the panda center's experts, and Huang is pleased that San Diego Zoo has renovated the enclosure for Yun Chuan and Xin Bao according to the suggestions of Chinese experts, who visited the site in March.

"Chinese experts always inspect the overseas enclosures to make sure they are comfortable and safe for the giant pandas to live in," said Li Desheng, deputy director of the conservation and research center.

Last year, the center inspected all 63 domestic enclosures for giant pandas and 23 cooperating institutions abroad. From the evaluation results, each cooperating institution meets the requirements, and the giant pandas are overall in good health, according to the center.

"The total number of giant pandas and their descendants involved in international cooperation exceeds 240, contributing significantly to the development of the current captive population of 728 giant pandas," Li said.

Giant panda cubs born overseas are required to be brought to China before they reach the age of 4.

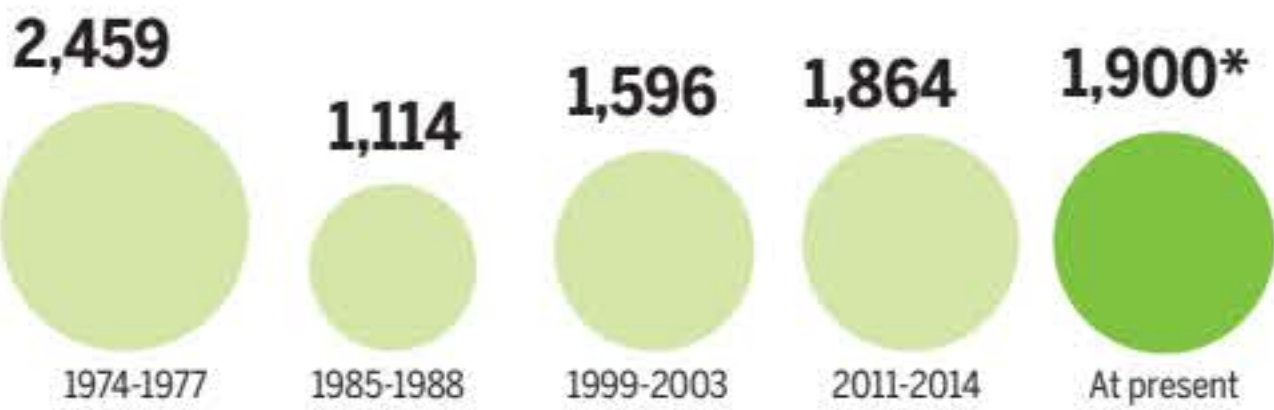
This year, China is actively advancing a new round of giant panda conservation cooperation with countries such as the US and Spain.

"Through international cooperative research projects, China has achieved significant success in the field of wild giant panda conservation, nurturing a large number of talent. The accumulation of these basic research results and talent cultivation has further propelled China's efforts in wild giant panda conservation," said Liu Dingzhen, a professor from the School of Life Sciences at Beijing Normal University.

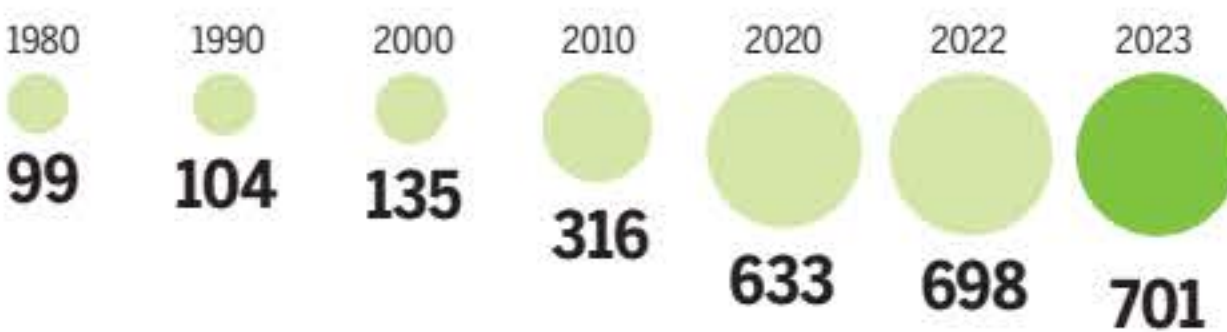
"Meanwhile, the international conservation funds raised through panda cooperative projects have played a positive role in China's wildlife conservation. They have promoted the establishment of panda conservation areas in China, advancing the protection and restoration of the giant panda's wild population and habitat."

Wild giant panda population

Results of national wild giant panda population surveys



Captive population of giant pandas



After returning to China, giant pandas need to readapt to the environment, including the food, caretakers, enclosures and other aspects of their care.

Ample amounts of bamboo and bamboo shoots are provided for nourishment during the return flight.

As of May 2024, China has established scientific research cooperation with 26 zoos in 20 countries.

01

Overseas transfer of giant pandas

Selection criteria
Considerations are made concerning age, gender, genetic characteristics and genetic lineage for greater genetic diversity.

Quarantine
Once the pandas are identified, they are isolated in quarantine enclosures according to the customs regulations of the destination country for approximately one month or longer.



To the airport
They are transported in air-conditioned trucks to the flight that will take them to another country.



Air transportation
To ensure comfort and safety during transportation, customized air transport crates are used, which allow giant pandas to move, eat and rest freely.

Veterinarians and keepers accompany the pandas on the flight to help them during the adjustment period.



02

Receiving giant pandas

Indoor and outdoor enclosures are prepared with temperature and humidity control systems. Considerations are made for caring for potential giant pandas should they come along. The enclosures are enriched with climbing structures, logs and other items to replicate the natural habitat of giant pandas.



Chinese and foreign keepers communicate to ensure the pandas are well looked after.

Adapting to new environments

With a new climate, keepers, enclosures and food, the pandas need some time to adjust. They usually need about three months to get used to the environment, sounds, smells and interactions with their new keepers.

Image generated by AI

During the adjustment period, Chinese keepers accompany and assist pandas for feeding and general care.

New home

The center or zoo that will receive the pandas is selected according to specific criteria evaluated in advance.

04

Completion of cooperation

The giant panda overseas exchange period is typically 10 years.

The two adult giant pandas, usually around 13 years old, return to China after the cooperation period.



Any cubs born during the giant pandas' stays abroad are sent to China before reaching adulthood (before age 4).

03

Selection criteria for cooperative partners

Facilities and care
The zoos included in the scope of cooperation are globally renowned or top-tier zoos in their respective countries, equipped with facilities, food sources, technical conditions and personnel capabilities required for panda care, breeding, public education, disease prevention and treatment, and scientific research.

Health control
They provide monthly health reports and annual medical examination reports for giant pandas. Chinese experts analyze the health status of giant pandas monthly, and regular exchanges and summaries of project progress are conducted.

Research cooperation and sharing
The details of scientific research cooperation need to be studied and determined in advance. Scientific research involving giant panda breeding and rearing, disease treatment, disease prevention, genetic preservation and other aspects require consent from the Chinese side. Both parties participate in scientific research and share achievements.

Communication
The public should be informed of the progress of international giant panda cooperation and the situation of giant pandas overseas, and responses to any public concerns about giant pandas abroad must be prompt.

Worldwide cooperation research



COMMENT

Editorials

EU should take a step back so it can see that it is barking up wrong tree

In yet another blow to the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, the 27-member bloc imposed sanctions on 19 Chinese companies on Monday, alleging that they have supplied components and equipment to Russia's military industry.

A list published in the European Union's Official Journal includes several Chinese companies located in Hong Kong as well as two global satellite giants, which are now subject to strict restrictions over sales of "dual-use goods and technology" that the European Union claims could be used for the "enhancement of Russia's defense and security sector".

The unilateral move the EU has made targeting Chinese companies, which has no evidence to justify it and has no legal basis in international law, undermines the trust that has been the foundation for ties, and creates more uncertainties for the already fragile bilateral relations.

The mutually beneficial China-EU trade relationship is experiencing a difficult time as politicians in Brussels are turning to protectionism to safeguard European industries, with the bloc deciding recently to impose extra duties of up to 38.1 percent on imported Chinese electric cars from July on the grounds that they have received excessive and unfair government subsidies.

By pushing ahead with more punitive measures against Chinese enterprises rather than seeking constructive dialogue to properly handle their differences, the EU has shown it is intent on pursuing short-term political gains in disregard of long-term and stable relations with China.

That Head Aerospace Technology, one of the 19 Chinese companies hit by the latest EU sanctions, was already placed on a United States sanctions list in 2023 for allegedly selling satellite images to Russia, reflects the readiness of the EU to toe Washington's anti-China line in cracking down on Chinese high-tech companies using their unsubstantiated links to the Russian military as an excuse.

China, which is not a direct party to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, has actively worked to promote talks for a political settlement. The Chinese government has always strictly monitored the exports of dual-use articles in accordance with the laws and regulations, and has never fanned the flames of the hostilities or sought selfish gains in the ongoing conflict.

Thus the EU is barking up the wrong tree by trying to smear the normal exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and Russian businesses and pointing an accusing finger at China for allegedly supporting Russia's military-industrial complex.

China and the EU, as two major forces advancing multipolarity and two major markets in support of globalization, are important trading partners to each other. Over the past two decades, the two sides have developed broad-based and all-dimensional cooperation, with two-way trade having grown by six times and two-way investment more than fivefold. Their daily trade volume is about 2.3 billion euros (\$2.46 billion) on average, delivering tangible benefits to people on both sides.

As Ursula von der Leyen, who is poised for a second term as president of the European Commission, has previously said, the China-EU relationship "is far too important to be put at risk by failing to clearly set the terms of a healthy engagement".

Hopefully, Brussels will be rational, exercise strategic autonomy and work with China to manage their relationship, which has a direct bearing not only on the interests of the people on both sides, but also concerns global prosperity and security.

The EU should not let its concerns about Russia cloud its judgment or lead to paranoia. It should give full play to the role of dialogue to resolve any issues it may have with China instead of adopting the US' discriminatory approach, which after all is intended to diminish China to the detriment of all.

Blame game burns another hole in ties

With his long career in US diplomacy serving six presidents and nine secretaries of state and his long-term academic interests and achievements in studies of diplomacy history, US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns should know better than most China-bashing politicians in Washington the root cause of the strained Sino-US ties these years. Also, having been confirmed in the post in December 2021, he should know what has been behind the ups and downs.

However, his lashing out at Beijing for various "underhand" actions that make it "impossible" to boost ties between ordinary Chinese and American people in a strongly worded interview published by The Wall Street Journal on Tuesday just serves to show how distanced Washington's view of China is from the reality.

Responding to the report, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that Burns' remarks are not in line with the facts, deviate from the important consensus reached by the two heads of state during their meeting in San Francisco on the correct way for China and the United States to get along with each other, and are not conducive to the healthy and stable development of bilateral relations.

It is the US side that has left no stone unturned in seeking to scupper engagement between the two peoples, hindering and preventing academic research, business, technology, finance and industry exchanges. Not to mention the unfair restrictions that it has imposed on the activities of Chinese diplomats, reporters or any individuals in the US and its allies that it deems to be connected with the Communist Party of China or the Chinese military.

One thing that Burns shied away from in his interview is the major motive driving such remarks, which is that the Chinese people should be addressed separately to create a distinction with the CPC, in a bid to erode the national and social cohesion of China.

With all that happening, it is Burns — whose stay in China should have provided him first-hand experience on the impacts of the US' systemic strategy to contain China on the Chinese society and economy — who should appreciate that he and his colleagues are still enjoying a comparatively cordial working environment in China.

The smiling and friendly faces showing goodwill to him during his travels around the country, as shown in his appearances on CBS's *60 Minutes*, which have been seen by the world including the US people, belie Burns' allegation that Beijing has been cultivating anti-US sentiment in Chinese society.

If so, Chinese students would not have made up the largest foreign student body in the US in the 2022-23 academic year, nearly 290,000, despite the US' discriminatory practices against them.

The racism against Chinese living, working and studying in the US has not receded since the former US administration openly fanned it during the COVID-19 pandemic. By inheriting and further reinforcing its predecessor's anti-China stance, the Biden administration has never sought to do anything to address that, only going further in saying one thing and doing another in dealing with China.

The image of the US in the minds of the Chinese people depends on the US itself. It is to be hoped that the US will work with China to promote cultural exchanges between the two nations through practical actions and promote the healthy and stable development of China-US relations.

If Burns really worries about the state of US-China people-to-people relations and wants to do his part to repair the ties, he should do more to tell Washington what China is really like and the harm its curbing of interactions has done to Sino-US relations, rather than trying to teach China what to do to make Washington happy.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Closure for Assange, but not for human rights violations by US

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange left a British prison on Monday after 1,901 days following a tentative deal with the United States Justice Department in which he agreed to plead guilty to a single felony count of violating the Espionage Act in exchange for time served.

Since it was founded in 2006, WikiLeaks has released hundreds of thousands of classified documents about the US' wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, exposing the torture of prisoners, human rights abuses and the killing of civilians. It was one of the biggest ever leaks that brought shame to the United States, the self-proclaimed guardian of human rights in the world. The revelations made the world see clearly the hypocrisy and true nature of the so-called guardian of human rights.

The US government says the leaks of classified military documents by WikiLeaks were reckless, damaging US' national security and endangering the lives of intelligence workers while Assange's supporters claim he has spent years in prison because he exposed atrocities committed by the US.

Since his arrest, people and organizations from around the world had called for Assange's release. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was lobbying with the US government to drop the charges against Assange, and a group of 60 Australian lawmakers sent a signed letter to the US government calling for an end to the case against Assange. In February, a motion in Australia's Federal House of Representatives calling on the US and Britain to "let Assange come home" was supported by 86 of 151 lawmakers.

Obviously, the deal with Assange is a way for the US to save its lost face amid mounting international pressure, from the Australian government in particular, to free him.

The deal seems to have brought closure to the Assange case. However, the human rights problems that WikiLeaks revealed are far from solved, and US surveillance of foreign and domestic citizens is only the tip of the iceberg of its human rights problems, which will continue.

— BEIJING NEWS

Cross-border e-commerce pick-me-ups

The General Administration of Customs estimates that in 2023 the total import and export volume of the nation's cross-border electronic commerce reached 2.38 trillion yuan (\$327.7 billion), up 15.6 percent. Cross-border e-commerce is the new engine driving foreign trade growth.

Yet it should also be noted that there are many shortcomings in the domestic cross-border e-commerce sector. The digital infrastructure, which includes online service platforms, is still far from satisfying. Besides, there are still some difficulties and bottlenecks in customs clearance, while the cultivation of overseas brands and intellectual property protection are still insufficient.

These issues need to be addressed to accelerate innovation and sustain prosperity in foreign trade development.

First, product quality improvement and brand building need to be strengthened. Proper policies can be introduced to encourage cross-border e-commerce enterprises to focus on technology, quality, service, culture and other brand connotations, so as to build a new image of Chinese brands in the global market featuring high product quality and trustworthy after-sale services.

Second, the building of digital infrastructure can accelerate. Technologies such as blockchain, big data and artificial intelligence can be more widely applied to promote the construction of global e-commerce infrastructure to support warehousing, logistics, payment and data, and form a digital trade closed loop covering the entire process of goods import and export.

With mature digital infrastructure and cultivated brands, other measures can also be taken, such as simplifying the foreign exchange procedures for small and micro cross-border e-commerce enterprises to minimize their economic and manual costs, improving financial service networks and encouraging all types of financial institutions to increase credit support to grant them easier access to their needed funds. Making use of the internet and social networks, e-commerce catches the trend of the times and it is imperative on the nation to rally more policy support so that Chinese consumers can buy globally and Chinese businesses can sell globally more conveniently.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

What They Say

Editor's Note: The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee is scheduled to be convened in Beijing in July. According to the main agenda of the session, the Political Bureau will report its work to the CPC Central Committee, and the session will primarily study issues concerning further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization. The following are excerpts from a People's Daily comment on reform.

Reform an inexhaustible driver of modernization

If China is to move forward, it must comprehensively deepen reform and opening-up. Deepening reform is essential to uphold and improve the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and to modernize China's governance system and capacity. The central leadership has put forward a series of original new ideas since 2012, among which, many have prompted historical changes and the reshaping of the governance system, and overall reconstruction in some crucial fields.

Focusing on the problem of unbalanced and inadequate development, the authorities have carried out regional coordinated development strategies and household registration system reforms. Aimed at enhancing the endogenous driving force of business entities, the authorities have deepened the reform of the fiscal and taxation system to reduce taxes and fees, as well as the reform of the science and technology system to promote innovation.

By carrying out medical care and health system reforms, the authorities have tried to resolve the difficulties and high costs people face in seeing a doctor. And to meet the people's higher demand for fairness and justice, the authorities have continuously deepened comprehensive reform of the judicial system.

To enhance the efficiency of governance, the authorities have carried out systematic institutional reforms of the Party and the government, and are making all-out efforts to enforce strict Party discipline.

The reforms always adhere to a problem-solving approach, seek to break through the constraints of entrenched ideas and concepts, break through the barriers of vested interests, and resolutely address the drawbacks in various systems and mechanisms.

The nation should continue to carry out reforms to consistently improve the institutional mechanisms to advance the country's modernization along the Chinese path.

The current and future periods are critical for building a strong country and realizing national rejuvenation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization. China's reform efforts must continue in the face of the complex international and domestic situations and the latest round of the scientific and technological revolution and the new demands of the people.

Opening-up is also reform. Believing that opening-up brings progress, while closure leads to backwardness, China will continue to promote high-level opening-up by opening its door wider and wider.

To further comprehensively deepen reform, attention must be paid to the effectiveness of reforms, as reform requires not just planning but also implementation.

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VIEWS

Jia Kang

New productive forces should suit local conditions

New quality productive forces comprise two main elements. The first is science and technology, which constitute the primary productive forces, and facilitate the multiplier effect in high-tech innovations, leading to a new level, new realm and new quality of productivity with qualitative changes. This applies mainly to new and high-tech industries.

The other element is step-by-step upgrading driven by the multiplier effect, which results from the optimization of the supply-side factors such as technology, institutions, data, labor, capital and natural resources that together constitute total factor productivity. This applies to all industries.

China needs to view new quality productive forces from the global perspective, because its “artificial intelligence-plus” sector lags behind those of developed economies. Fortunately, the central government has taken measures to catch up with global cutting-edge development through the complete rectification of leading platform enterprises.

The rectification aims to promote the healthy development of leading internet companies, so they can lead the country’s high-tech enterprises and industrial clusters to write a new chapter in new high-tech development.

At the same time, we need to explain why the recent increase in unicorn companies is shrinking in China. To begin with, the support for original and major innovations in the digital field, and for developing a high-standard and legalized business environment has been inadequate in recent years. Given this fact, local governments should have employed performance evaluation mechanisms to produce better results, but they failed to do so due to a lack of experience and regulation.

Besides, there is a lack of high-quality talents in cutting-edge industries. Although the central and local governments have invested huge amounts in recent years to improve the infrastructure and other facilities of schools and universities, they have failed to cultivate enough leading talents.

Hence, it is necessary to solve these problems by integrating innovation in institutions, management, syllabuses and the high-tech sector. In this regard, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee scheduled for next month may release new guidelines on major reform measures, which may help local governments to find new ways to bolster the digital economy and enhance talent cultivation.

For the time being, local governments should tailor new quality productive forces to local conditions, meaning they should take measures to promote innovation in accordance with the reality of the situation and find high-quality solutions for supply-side structural problems.

Against this backdrop, some local governments should adopt a cautious approach while implementing the central government’s policies. For instance, new and old infrastructure projects can be developed well together by integrating digital technology in the real economy. At the same time, local governments need to develop their own unique and innovative projects.

The central government began issuing ultra-long-term national bonds from May. Compared with ordinary government bonds, including short- and medium-term bonds, the ultra-long-term bonds can ease the debt repayment burden of local govern-



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

ments to a certain extent. As a matter of fact, the ultra-long-term national bonds can help solve some major problems of local governments as the bonds are not suitable to be used to directly support the development of some cutting-edge technologies, a problem which should be handled by enterprises themselves.

Yet the local governments can take advantage of land planning to improve public facilities and infrastructure, whose costs can be covered by the ultra-long-term

bond funds, and thus boost domestic demand and inject new vitality into the economy. The bonds can also be used to optimize the industrial structure and increase employment in the medium and long term.

Many local governments invest in business incubators, entrepreneurship parks and “artificial intelligence-plus” projects. However, since local governments cannot be the major entities in handling such high-risk cutting-edge technologies, non-govern-

ment investment and venture capital need to play a bigger role in the development of high-tech.

There is no singular path to developing new quality productive forces; local governments should explore tailored approaches based on their unique conditions.

The author is the former director of the China Academy of New Supply Side Economics. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Renato Baumann

China, Latin America justified in bolstering ties

Economic exchanges between Latin America and China have gained momentum after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially through trade between China and Latin American countries on the Pacific coast but have gradually spread to, and intensified in, other areas.

China is the main trading partner of several Latin American countries, and direct investment from China in Latin America and the Caribbean has remained above \$4.5 billion a year. This has made the region an important destination for Chinese investment. The region now attracts resources similar to those destined for the United States and the European Union.

Another dimension of Sino-Latin American ties is the amount of loans provided by China for the Latin American and Caribbean economies. According to Boston University Global Development Policy Center, from 2005 to 2022, China lent \$136 billion to these countries, about 82 percent of which was invested in the energy sector mostly in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Even though the energy sector has attracted by far most of the loans, Chinese interest in Latin America is diversified in terms of sectors. For example, Brazil intends to jointly develop semiconductors



with China. Also, Chinese companies are building subways in Bogota, and China is buying lithium

mines in Argentina, as well as renewing its swap agreements with the country. Recently, Chinese-made electric vehicles have found a potentially big market in South America.

Chinese investment in transportation infrastructure, too, has increased. The \$3.6 billion mega-port in Chancay, Peru, built by COSCO and to be inaugurated later this year, is bound to become an important export and import hub for South America, especially for trade between South American countries and China and other Asian countries. The port will reduce transportation time by one-third, benefiting exporters from countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela and Guyana. Those that stand to especially benefit from this new facility are producers of soya, corn, meat and different types of minerals.

This increase in Chinese presence in Latin America has often led some analysts to gauge the reaction of the US, given the frequent reference to the so-called Monroe Doctrine (“America for the Americans”).

At least until recently, the official position of the US was one of favoring competition, as it believed more players are good for healthy competition. But that has changed somewhat after Chinese investments increased in the energy sector and some strategic minerals. The rise in the trade of minerals has evoked reactions from the US Army Southern Command, which has raised concerns over the possibility of China getting easier access to strategic minerals in the region.

Furthermore, the potentially important role the Chancay port, after completion, seems set to play has raised some Western countries’ worries that the Chinese navy may use the port not only for commercial purposes but also as a geostrategic tool. This assumption, needless to say, is ridiculous.

Yet such fears have not prompted Latin American countries to boost trade relations with their traditional major trading partner. Instead, the Latin American countries have simultaneously maintained good economic and diplomatic relations with both the US and China, and there is no indication of any change in their position in the near future.

One cannot say there has been no pressure on the Latin American countries, given that the US often refers to security issues related to Chinese products or com-

panies, and says that there should be an orchestrated movement against China’s human rights policy.

Most Western states remain committed to the international mechanisms for human rights protection, because they view them as a source of morality and legitimacy, and believe states can be “punished” for violating the agreed parameters classifying policies on human rights.

China’s policy on human rights is a bit different. It views human rights not only in legal terms, but also accords priority to socioeconomic rights and the right to development, and insists that laws to protect human rights be enforced according to each country’s national conditions.

Latin America accepts that there may be differences on specific issues due to the peculiarities of each society, and hence opts for non-interference, whereas China does not seem to be trying to convince other states of its position. Acting separately on such sensitive matters has allowed the two sides to strengthen their partnership and seek common development.

The author is coordinator of External Economic Relations at the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil. The views don't necessarily reflect those of IPEA or China Daily.

Mei Xinyu

US tariffs a sign of weakness, not strength

The United States has imposed tariffs of up to 100 percent on imports from China, encompassing electric vehicles (EVs), EV batteries, and battery parts. This move has spurred a chain reaction among its allies, leading to the European Union’s recent imposition of preliminary additional tariffs of up to 38.1 percent on Chinese EVs, with Canada now also deliberating on potential actions.

But the aggressive stance does not reflect the United States’ strength; instead, it highlights its relative decline and waning confidence. The tariffs will burden US consumers and businesses with higher costs, weakening the US’ economic outlook.

Trade protectionism is a chronic disease the US is afflicted by, particularly during election years. Politicians seeking re-election often resort to protectionist measures to appease key voter blocs and industries. This strategy is well-documented, notably by economist Mancur Olson in his book, *The Logic of Collective Action*. According to Olson, industries that derive benefits from protectionist measures, such as tariffs, have a stronger incentive to lobby for these measures than the dispersed consumers who actually bear the costs.

Historical patterns show the political nature of the US’ trade protectionism. For example, in late 2000, the Bill Clinton administration targeted steel imports from China, India and Ukraine amid a contentious election battle between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush, both of whom aimed to win the votes of steelworkers and other labor groups in crucial swing states. And in 2002, former US president George W. Bush imposed steel tariffs to gain the favor of the steel industry ahead of the midterm elections.

Biden, despite his economic advisers understanding the irrationality of additional tariffs, has been succumbing to the same political pressure. During his last campaign, Biden criticized the then US president Donald Trump’s tariffs, arguing that they were ultimately paid by US consumers, not China. Yet given his falling ratings in key battleground states, Biden has resorted to trade protectionism.

The Cold War mentality, which views China as the US’ primary global strategic competitor, fuels US trade protectionism and sanctions. The US administration’s push and emphasis on EV production have not closed the gap between US and Chinese manufacturing. On the contrary, China’s EV industry has surged ahead, leaving US competitors struggling to catch up. This gap has prompted the Biden administration to resort to protectionist measures rather than engaging in open market competition, which reflects the failure of Biden’s economic policy.

Despite the new tariffs, China’s industries, particularly its EV sector, are likely to continue their upward trajectory. At present, China exports relatively few EVs to the US, minimizing the immediate impact of the tariffs. Plus, China’s automotive industry, both in terms of production and sales, has already surpassed that of the entire European Union and US markets combined.

China’s production scale ensures that its industries will maintain their competitive edge through economies of scale, even without access to the US market. Since this advantage will only increase over time, it’s unlikely that the US’ protectionist measures will significantly hinder China’s industrial progress.

The US, once a champion of global free trade, has increasingly adopted protectionist and politically-motivated trade policies, which have undermined the global economic system and hindered innovation by prioritizing domestic political gains over broader economic benefits.

China, as a leading advocate for free trade, must offer a more compelling vision for the global economic order. By championing development-oriented trade rules and opposing the protectionist policies of the West, China can lead the world toward a more prosperous and equitable future.

Therefore, China’s response to US tariffs should be measured and strategic, targeting the protectionist factions without antagonizing the US people or trade partners, while Chinese enterprises should navigate these challenges by mitigating risks and finding alternative channels to the US market. Simultaneously, China should continue to promote global economic cooperation and development, countering the regressive trends of protectionism and excessive regulation.

The author is a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

WORLD

Address by Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the Opening Plenary of the Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2024

Dalian, June 25, 2024

Your Excellency President Andrzej Duda,
Your Excellency Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh,
Professor Klaus Schwab,
Your Excellencies Heads of International Organizations,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

It is a great pleasure to join friends, old and new, here in the beautiful city of Dalian for the 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions. Let me begin by extending, on behalf of the Chinese government, warm congratulations on the opening of the annual meeting and cordial welcome to all participants and journalists.

It has been five years since the Summer Davos was last held in Dalian. In the past five years, global transformation not seen in a century unfolded at a faster pace and world economic development reached a critical juncture. As many people wonder where the future of the world lies, this annual meeting, focusing on “Next Frontiers for Growth,” is particularly relevant. I believe you all have your own thoughts and insights about the significance and value of exploring next frontiers for growth. Here, I would like to share with you three observations.

First, we need to confront the growth predicament of the world economy. The road to recovery has been treacherous since the onset of COVID-19. According to forecasts of the International Monetary Fund and other institutions, global growth may remain moderate or even slow in the coming years, and generally below the pre-pandemic level. Anemic global growth is not only caused by temporary factors such as impact of the pandemic, high inflation and rising debt. It is also ascribed to some deep-seated problems and intrinsic issues. From a cyclical perspective, the three industrial revolutions since the 1760s, which were respectively marked by the utilization of steam engines, electricity and information technologies, all transformed the way of production and life in human society. Each was followed by a surge in global growth. However, when the impetus unleashed by existing technological models diminished, global growth would slide into a period of stagnation. The impact of such fundamental transformation is manifold. **At the macro level,** we would see a slowdown of economic growth, and find it more difficult to make the pie of global economy bigger. **At the meso level,** we would see declining return on investment and diminishing economies of scale, with more business sectors turning from blue to red oceans. **At the micro level,** we would see intensifying competition among market players and spiraling “involution.” The neck-to-neck contest for available resources is, to some extent, triggering problems including backlash against globalization and

escalation of geopolitical conflicts.

Confronted with the growth predicament of the world economy, maximizing one’s own benefits at the expense of others’ interests, or resorting to regressive actions of decoupling, disrupting supply chains and building small yards with high fences would only push up operational costs, sever the economic links between regions and aggravate tensions and disputes. This would drag the world into a destructive spiral where the fierce competition for a larger slice ends up in a diminishing pie. As we Chinese often say, “Range far your eye over long vistas.” In the current context, the right choice is to approach development issues with a longer view and broader mind, and join hands with others to make the pie bigger while pursuing one’s legitimate interests. This is how we could sustain the growth of the world economy, and open new horizon for our own development.

Second, we need to seize the new opportunities brought by the sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation. To overcome the growth predicament, we need to cultivate new engines for growth. We are delighted to see that as the new round of sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation deepens, global innovation activities in science and technology have become more intensive and dynamic than ever before. With the sparks ignited across domains, next frontiers for growth are starting to take shape. **From a technology perspective,** this round of sci-tech revolution is mainly powered by progress in intelligent, green and health technologies. The rapid advance of cutting-edge information, energy and biological technologies has provided new pathways for tackling climate change, energy crisis and other major challenges facing humanity. It has also notably enhanced the quality and efficiency of the supply system, and catalyzed and generated massive new demand. **From an industry perspective,** breakthroughs and integration of frontier technologies have redefined traditional production function, triggered a quantum leap in productivity, and opened up new domains and avenues of business, including artificial intelligence (AI), green energy and biomedicine. A host of sectors are expected to evolve into multi-trillion-dollar pillar industries. **From a business model perspective,** as the sci-tech revolution progresses, the organization of economic activities and industries is undergoing rapid transformation, which is characterized by the features of platform-based operation, networked structure and ubiquitous presence. New forms and models of business such as online services, C2M customization, and smart manufacturing are quickly emerging, making our life more convenient, and giving everyone a fair and accessible chance to participate. In a word, a number of frontier technologies and industries with the potential of explosive growth are metamorphos-



Chinese Premier Li Qiang addresses the opening plenary of the 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the Summer Davos, in Dalian, Liaoning province, on Tuesday. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

ing and ready to burst onto the stage. This brings light and hope for catapulting the world economy into a new upward cycle.

To embrace the global trend of sci-tech advances and industrial development, all countries are making forward planning and deployment. China has also taken exploratory steps in this regard. In recent years, we have continued to promote high-quality development, accelerate the cultivation of new quality productive forces, and foster new drivers of growth. These efforts have provided strong dynamism for China’s economic development, and created greater cooperation space for companies around the world. **The rapid rise of China’s new industries is in line with the global trend of sci-tech revolution and green development.** Seizing the favorable opportunities from the sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation worldwide, China has been working hard to advance sci-tech innovation. We encourage companies to be first movers and make continuous investments in cutting-edge fields. Now, after years of cultivation, a number of enterprises and industries in China have gained an edge internationally. In particular, China has been vigorously developing green industries in recent years, such as new energy, to address climate change with concrete actions and meet the twin goals of carbon peak and carbon neutrality. As a result, China’s installed capacity of hydropower, wind power, solar power and nuclear power under construction has all been topping the world for many years running. And renewable energy now accounts for over 50 percent of China’s total installed capacity. Electric vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products made by Chinese

companies have not only met domestic demand, but also enriched supply in the international market, eased the pressure of inflation worldwide, and contributed to the global climate response. **The rapid rise of China’s new industries is rooted in its unique comparative advantages.** China has a super-sized market of more than 1.4 billion people, a complete industrial supporting system, abundant labor force and talent pool, and diverse scenarios for application. Plus, Chinese consumers are fairly receptive to new technologies. All these make China a broad stage for enterprises to pursue innovation and upgrade their products. The economies of scale can help to reduce innovation costs for enterprises and accommodate the growth of different technology roadmaps and business models. That is also how China’s emerging industries get their competitiveness. **The rapid rise of China’s new industries is a testament to the principal role of enterprises in innovation.** Enterprises stand at the forefront of the market. They are most sensitive to the changes of demands, and have the strongest desire for innovation. From the Chinese government’s perspective, we have been doing our best to foster a market-oriented, world-class business environment within a sound legal framework. To that end, we have been abolishing regulations that limit market access and fair competition, facilitating the flow of factors of innovation to enterprises and promoting fine entrepreneurial spirit, so that enterprises can fully unleash the dynamism of innovation. China’s large market is open. Foreign companies compete, communicate and cooperate with domestic ones on a level playing field, and they have become a major force enabling the birth and growth

of emerging industries. **The rapid growth of new industries and new drivers has buttressed the sound and sustained development of the Chinese economy.** Since the start of this year, the Chinese economy has sustained the momentum of recovery. It got off to a good start in the first quarter with a 5.3 percent year-on-year growth, and continued steady growth in the second quarter. We have the confidence and capability to achieve the growth target of around 5 percent for this year.

Third, we need to open up a vast blue ocean for future economic development. Facing major opportunities brought by the latest round of sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation, we will, as always, keep to the direction of building an open world economy, harness the momentum, make bold explorations, and work together to create new development space. In this connection, I wish to propose the following:

— **First, deepening sci-tech exchanges and cooperation.** Science and technology are key variables in future development. Major sci-tech progress usually comes from unrelenting research, accumulation and extensive cooperation. The exploration of new frontiers should not be seen as a zero-sum game. It is a process where all players compete for excellence and make progress together. Resorting to the “small yard, high fence” approach cannot hold back the development of others; it only ends up constraining oneself. The wise thing to do is to create an open, fair and nondiscriminatory environment for sci-tech innovation on the basis of protecting intellectual property, so as to enable the free flow of ideas for innovation and creation.

— **Second, enhancing the foundation for green development.** There is only one Earth for humanity. Growth in the future has to be premised on harmony between man and nature. We need to stand by the goals and principles of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement, follow the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and deliver on our respective emission reduction responsibilities. We cannot slow down our pace in green transition in exchange for short-term growth, or practice protectionism in the name of green development or environmental protection. Green transition itself provides huge potential for development. We need to jointly advance the development of green and low-carbon industries and foster more growth drivers for the green economy.

— **Third, safeguarding an open market environment.** The history of global economic development shows that openness brings progress while isolation leaves one behind. Only through open interactions, exchanges and mutual learning can we keep pushing the boundaries of development and discover and open up new frontiers. In many ways, the depth of international cooperation determines the height of human development. So it is essential that we embrace each other with open arms and work closely with each other, reject bloc confrontation and decoupling, keep industrial and supply chains stable and smooth, and advance trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, so as to promote the sound development of globalization and form a strong synergy for global economic growth.

— **Fourth, promoting inclusive and mutually beneficial development.** New technologies such as AI and big data, while contributing to economic growth, may also cause problems such as structural unemployment, economic inequality and technology and AI divide. It is important to coordinate the development and governance of new technologies, make timely improvements to laws and governance frameworks to address conflicting rules and social risks brought by frontier technologies and industrial development, and strive to achieve more inclusive development that benefits all. It is also important to provide education and training to vulnerable groups and upskill the workforce, so that more countries and people can benefit from innovation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,
Development has no limits. Exploration knows no boundary. China stands ready to join hands with all countries to sail the giant ship of the world economy into a vast blue ocean and create an even brighter future for humanity.

I wish the annual meeting a full success.
Thank you.

Chinese EV maker to open manufacturing plant in Kenya

By EDITH MUTETHYA
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Kenya is set to establish its first electric vehicle manufacturing plant, utilizing Chinese technology as well as aiming to promote green transportation across East Africa.

The opening of Chinese EV maker Neta’s flagship showroom in the capital Nairobi on Wednesday marked a significant milestone. Eric Lumallas, assistant to the CEO of Moja EV Kenya, the exclusive distributor of Neta cars in Africa, said

at the opening ceremony that local assembly of Neta cars is scheduled to commence in the next two months.

The company has also cooperated with local partners to ensure nationwide vehicle servicing, Lumallas said.

“We are in discussion with commercial banks to offer financial support to our customers,” he said, adding that the cars are retailing at \$34,969.

Each car includes two chargers: one for home installation and an emergency charger for on-the-go

use, he said. They take 15 to 20 minutes to be fully charged.

Joy Wanyonyi, head of business development at Kenyan automobile company Associated Vehicle Assemblers, said local manufacturing of the vehicles will provide job opportunities for Kenyans while facilitating technology transfer and sectoral growth.

Neta is planning to assemble 250 vehicles per month, and the market uptake is expected to be good, Wanyonyi said. She also commended government efforts to revise policies to enhance the EV market’s viability.

“If the proposed national locomotive policy is implemented and specifically reducing taxes on electric vehicles, then we will sell more at a better price,” she said.

Wang Aiping, chief executive of Moja EV Kenya, said opening the showroom in Nairobi marks the beginning of a new chapter in Kenya’s automotive industry.

Greener future

“Our journey to this grand opening has been fueled by a commitment to excellence, sustainability and the vision of a greener present

and future for Kenya,” Wang said.

The world is rapidly shifting toward sustainable energy solutions, Wang said, and EVs are at the forefront of the revolution.

“By choosing electric vehicles, we are not just adopting a new mode of transportation; we are contributing to a cleaner and healthier environment for us, our children and future generations.”

Sun Guang, assistant vice-president and executive of overseas business division of Neta, said that although Kenya has about 30,000 taxis, the proportion of EVs remains extremely low, with only 100 secondhand electric cars in operation.

“This indicates significant untapped potential in the country’s

electric vehicle market,” Sun said.

Currently, Neta offers its Neta V model in Kenya, with plans to introduce others such as the Neta Aya and Neta X, he said.

With increasing global demand for clean energy and sustainable transportation, he said Kenya and other developing countries are poised to gain dual economic and environmental benefits by promoting EVs.

China leads globally in renewable energy cars. Last year, the country produced 9.5 million such vehicles, accounting for nearly one-third of the world’s total and marking its ninth consecutive year as the largest producer, according to China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

WORLD

Direct flights benefit both economies

Indian industry insiders see positivity, calling for resumption of air services

By APARAJIT CHAKRABORTY in New Delhi For China Daily

The immediate resumption of direct flight services between India and Chinese mainland will meet the needs of both the Indian and Chinese people and benefit both economies, industry insiders said.

Direct flights are always the first preference for travelers. Today, travelers often look for ease of travel with visa relaxations and direct flights. Jyoti Mayal, president of the Travel Agents Association of India, said there will always be an increase in footfall if every country follows these.

It enables countries on both sides to concentrate on prominent and focused marketing by airlines and tourism boards, Mayal said.

Atul Dalakoti, executive director of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, told China Daily that direct flights are always welcome by travelers and businesspeople. "We hope that India and China can, through dialogue, work together to improve relationships and solve existing issues between them," he added.

Direct flight services between Chinese mainland and India were suspended in March 2020 at the outbreak of the pandemic. But services have not resumed since then.

The lack of direct flights between the two nations has posed major challenges for hundreds of Indians who study in China, as well as the families of many Indians, including businesspeople, who began to work in China after travel restrictions were lifted by both countries.

Passengers from India currently travel to the Chinese mainland through Singapore, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Myanmar after paying exorbitantly high airfares.

Indian trader Shranik Chopra said since China is an important destination for many businesspeople from India, there must be direct flight services for the benefit of people from both sides.

Chopra, who takes part in the Canton Fair every year, said direct flight services would cut out the

unnecessary waste of time, reduce travel expenses and ease the ordeal faced by Indians at transit airports.

Sunil Kumar, who does business in Yiwu city of China's Zhejiang province, said direct flights between the Chinese mainland and India can reduce travel time from 12 hours to six, save money and avoid hassles and delays with baggage during transit.

When asked about the lack of direct flights last week, Randhir Jaiswal, spokesman of India's Ministry of External Affairs, said "peace and tranquillity on the border are important" for the improvement of bilateral ties.

Before the pandemic, Air India, India's national carrier, used to operate four nonstop direct services a week from Shanghai to New Delhi, and onward to Mumbai.

After travel restrictions were lifted by both countries, Kumar, and about 107 traders and businesspeople were the first Indians to land in Hangzhou in August 2022. They took a charter flight from New Delhi, which was operated by China Southern Airlines.

Convenience stressed

"It will be more convenient to travel to India if there is a direct flight and we hope it will resume soon," said Robin Jiang, a Chinese national who is now based in New Delhi.

Many tourists from China are keen to visit India. The number of Chinese tourists and corporate travelers to India has reduced significantly because of the non-availability of direct flight services between the two countries, said hotel industry analyst Ranjan Banerjee. Direct flights could give a boost to India's hotel and tourism industries, Banerjee added.

In a recent interview in Dubai, Pieter Elbers, CEO of India's largest airline IndiGo, said, "When the time is right and the governments (of both countries) come to a mutual understanding of how to move forward, we'll assess the market."

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Xu Weiwei in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

Pop legend



Artist Alkent Pozhegu works on a mosaic of Michael Jackson made of grains on the 15th anniversary of his death in Kosovo on Tuesday. VALDRIN XHEMAJ / REUTERS

Indonesia struggles as dollar strengthens

JAKARTA — Indonesian industries that depend on imported raw materials are grappling with the depreciation of the Indonesian rupiah against the US dollar.

The strengthening of the dollar drives up the cost of raw materials and logistics tariffs, raising manufacturing expenses. While adjusting prices is challenging due to low domestic purchasing power, worker efficiency may be the last option.

In line with a downward trend in recent months, the value of the rupiah in relation to the dollar on Tuesday is 16,513.15 for the purchasing

rate and 16,348.84 for the selling rate. The exchange rate was about 15,000 in April last year but has consistently exceeded 15,000 since the US Federal Reserve raised interest rates to 5.25 to 5.50 percent.

Hardest-hit industry

The pharmaceutical industry, which imports 90 percent of its raw materials, is significantly affected. "This makes the pharmaceutical industry very vulnerable to fluctuations in the rupiah exchange rate," Executive Director of the Indonesian Pharmaceutical Association



Palestinians mourn for a female relative killed in an Israeli bombardment in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. ABDEL KAREEM HANA / AP

China urges Israel to implement cease-fire

By MINLU ZHANG at the United Nations minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

Despite a United Nations Security Council cease-fire resolution, there have been continuous attacks on Gaza, said China's ambassador to the UN, urging Israel to heed international calls for an immediate cease-fire.

The council adopted a resolution this month endorsing a three-phase cease-fire deal proposed by the United States. The US said Israel had already accepted the cease-fire proposal.

"Unfortunately, to date, we have not seen concrete signs from Israel indicating an agreement to achieve a lasting cease-fire," Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said.

Instead, Israel continued its large-scale military operations, attacking multiple refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, he said. The attacks have caused major casualties and put humanitarian organizations, such as the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

and the International Committee of the Red Cross, in danger, he said.

"An immediate cease-fire must be implemented, and once achieved, there must be no restart of the war," Fu emphasized.

The US blamed Hamas for stalling the cease-fire resolution, saying that Hamas ignored voices from the international community.

Stance reiterated

Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, reiterated on Tuesday that any cease-fire proposal for the Gaza Strip that does not guarantee a full Israeli troop pullout from the enclave "is unacceptable".

Haniyeh also called on the international community to help secure a cease-fire, deliver aid and supply provisions to the people in Gaza.

Fu also voiced his concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza. He said Israel's military actions threatened humanitarian workers and called its accusations of inaction by the agencies "unacceptable".

He called on Israel to protect humanitarian workers and ensure that sufficient supplies enter Gaza

swiftly and are delivered safely to those in need.

The UN has told Israel that it will suspend aid operations across Gaza unless urgent steps are taken to protect humanitarian workers. In April, Israel's military strikes killed seven workers of the World Central Kitchen. The UN World Food Programme has suspended aid delivery from a US-built pier due to security concerns.

A UN report released on Tuesday said Gaza is facing "a high and sustained risk of famine". It said 96 percent of the population in Gaza, or about 2.15 million people, face acute food insecurity at "crisis" levels or higher. Almost half a million people are enduring "catastrophic" conditions, the report said.

China is also deeply concerned about reports of Israel preparing a military attack on Lebanon, Fu said. "The situation in the Middle East is very precarious, and the world cannot afford for Lebanon to become another Gaza," he said.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

US denies aircraft carrier attack claim

By MIKE GU in Hong Kong mikegu@chinadailyhk.com

Amid questioning surrounding attacks by Yemen's armed Houthi group, the US aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower arrived in Souda Bay, Greece, on Tuesday, heading home after eight months in the Red Sea.

"Time to bring them home," a US official told the United States Naval Institute News. The official order by US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to bring the aircraft carrier back to the US, due to whatever reasons, reignited speculation of its likely damage from Houthi rocket or drone attacks.

Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree told Al Masirah television channel on Saturday: "The missile forces of our armed forces carried out a targeting operation against the US aircraft carrier Eisenhower in the northern Red Sea with a number of ballistic and cruise missiles, and the operation achieved its objectives successfully."

Hours after the claim, a statement issued by the US Central Command said, "Separately, Houthis launched three anti-ship ballistic missiles from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen into the Gulf of Aden. There were no injuries or significant damage reported by the US coalition, or merchant vessels."

But the US statement added,

"Recent claims about a successful attack by Houthi forces on the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower are categorically false."

The US-led campaign against Houthis, overshadowed by the conflict in the Gaza Strip, has turned into the most intense running sea battle the US Navy has faced since World War II, some officials and naval experts told The Associated Press.

The US Department of Defense also issued a statement on June 22, noting the "Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group departed the US Central Command area of responsibility today and will remain briefly in the US European Command area of responsibility before returning home after more than seven months deployed in support of US regional deterrence and force protection efforts".

Retaliatory strike

Earlier, the Houthis said that they had successfully attacked the US aircraft carrier in a retaliatory strike.

Saree first announced the attack on the aircraft carrier on May 31, in retaliation against the killings of at least 16 people in military strikes by the US and the United Kingdom on the Hodeidah Province in Yemen. The figure was the highest publicly acknowledged death toll

from multiple rounds of strikes, according to an Al Jazeera report.

"Within the framework of reacting to the US-UK aggression, Yemen's rocket and naval forces conducted a joint operation, attacking the US aircraft carrier Eisenhower in the Red Sea," Saree told the Al Masirah TV channel.

However, a US military official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, said in response that the aircraft carrier was fine.

The US has a track record of minimizing or obscuring instances of attacks on its military forces in the Middle East.

Song Xiaojun, a special commentator from CCTV, noted the Houthis' actions are indeed a significant source of concern for the US, reflecting the challenges the US will face in future competition with other countries.

Some net users shared their opinions that Houthis did give a blow to the aircraft carrier. A platform user named "matutinal procyonloto" posted on X that: "Despite fierce denials, I think a Houthis ballistic missile did hit the Eisenhower doing serious damage."

"I'd think the Houthis got a hit on Eisenhower. Maybe not a direct hit but they did damage," another user named "fgx15", who introduced himself as a 31-year-old Australian on the platform, posted on X.

Ruto rejects tax bill and returns it to parliament

NAIROBI — Kenya's President William Ruto on Wednesday declined to sign a finance bill that has sparked nationwide deadly protests, and has sent it back to parliament for amendments, Kenya's Star newspaper and KTN News reported.

Police opened fire on crowds who massed around parliament on Tuesday and later broke into parliament buildings, minutes after lawmakers had voted through tax hikes seeking to raise an additional \$2.7 billion.

Kenyan protesters vowed on Wednesday to keep up their demonstrations against new tax hikes, a day after violent clashes outside parliament and across the country left at least 23 people dead and scores wounded.

Aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres said its staff members were left hurt and traumatized when stones were thrown at one of its ambulances during Tuesday's unrest. The Kenya Red Cross also said its staff and vehicles were attacked, without going into further detail.

The Star newspaper reported it had been informed by sources in Ruto's office the president has proposed a raft of amendments which members of parliament will have to consider.

Ruto termed Tuesday's street protests as "treasonous", noting that his government will soon provide an expeditious response to the situation.

In his televised address to the nation on Tuesday night, Ruto said the government has mobilized all resources to ensure the situation does not occur again "at whatever cost." He directed security organs to use all means possible to thwart any threats to the national security.

African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat on Tuesday expressed "deep concern" over the deadly violence in Kenya.

In a statement, the AU chief said he is following the outbreak of violence after the public protests in Kenya, which has resulted in a loss of life and damage to property.

He also urged national stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue to address the issues that led to the protests in the interest of Kenya.

During Tuesday's protests, demonstrators in Nairobi also raided the City County Government, vandalizing property and setting ablaze some offices.

The protests in the capital brought businesses to a standstill, with all the shops in the central business district remaining shut.

Public transport was disrupted across Nairobi, and many operators of commuter buses grounded their vehicles, leaving office workers stranded, with many of them opting to walk for kilometers away from the central business district to try to get vehicles home.

The lawmakers on Tuesday morning passed the finance bill 2024, seeking to raise an additional 346.7 billion shillings (\$2.67 billion), by such measures as increasing the railway development levy from 1.5 percent to 2.5 percent, as well as the import declaration fee from 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent.

Ruto, who won the elections in August 2022 on a platform of helping the poor, has been under pressure to raise additional revenues amid rising government debt repayments.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Blast off



South Korean marines fire a Spike anti-tank missile into waters off the island of Yeonpyeong on Wednesday during a drill. YONHAP NEWS AGENCY

XINHUA

WORLD

Decoupling result of US' China policy

Washington aims to suppress Beijing instead of fair competition, experts say

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

Capital market decoupling between the United States and China is occurring to some extent, and US restrictions targeting China have played a significant role, experts said.

The US Department of Treasury issued a statement on Friday saying that Washington would draft rules to carry out an Aug 9 executive order that called for limiting US investments "in certain national security technologies and products in countries of concern".

The rules, applying to artificial intelligence, semiconductors and quantum information technologies, would prohibit some transactions in certain technologies and products that "pose a particularly acute national security threat to the United States", or would require that the Treasury be first notified of the transactions.

US venture capital firms are also pressuring technology startups to cut ties with Chinese investors, as they expect Washington to tighten controls on foreign ownership, the Financial Times reported on June 7.

HeyGen, a generative AI startup founded in Shenzhen in 2020 that later relocated to Los Angeles, asked its Chinese investors to sell shares to their US counterparts, FT reported.

"There is no question in my mind that these developments are hugely influenced by the US government's tech bans and inbound and outbound investment screening and denial orders," Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington, told China Daily.

"The VC market, understandably, is simply reacting to the US government's heavy-handed de jure and de facto prescriptions."

In 2018, then-US president Donald Trump signed the Foreign Investment Risk Review Act, which applied greater scrutiny to certain equity investments in areas related to critical technologies, critical infrastructure or businesses with sensitive personal data, as well as certain types of real estate transactions, without explicitly naming China.

Gupta said that since then, the US government's goal has been to shut down any gaps in those areas to prevent Chinese entities from using even a minority investment position in early-stage companies to obtain new technology.

US President Joe Biden signed an executive order last August to establish a foreign investment review mechanism to restrict US entities from investing in China's semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technology, and artificial intelligence fields.

In September 2022, Jake Sullivan, US national security adviser, listed three "families of technologies" — advanced computing, including chips, AI and quantum; biotechnologies and biomanufacturing; and clean area technologies — where the US would seek to maintain a lead.

Gupta said those areas are where the US side would essentially seek to "decouple" from China.

"I think the impact of these policy decisions in the medium to long term will be momentous," Gupta said.

On Monday, China's Ministry of Commerce said the US has repeatedly emphasized that it has no intention of "decoupling" from China or hindering China's economic development. However, it insists on issuing proposed rules to restrict US companies' investments in China and suppress the normal development of Chinese industries, the ministry said in a statement.

Gupta noted that US-China economic interdependence over the past four decades was built on their different endowments and comparative advantages.

However, as China "has raced up the technology ladder", the difference in comparative advantage in the technical areas has shrunk markedly, leading to greater resemblance than difference today in industrial structures, particularly in advanced manufacturing sectors.

Goal laid bare

"And so, the goal for the US going forward is to decouple and suppress China in these sectors rather than countenance fair competition," Gupta said.

William Jones, a nonresident fellow at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, said US venture capitalists would certainly like to get a "piece of the action" in China's high-tech area while the US government is taken aback by China's rapid progress in high-tech, and it seeks to restrain that progress by preventing venture capital from getting involved in China.

"There is also pushback from some of the major business organizations that would like to see a less restrictive policy toward China from the US government. Restrictions by the US government on semiconductors and other fields will slow down, but not stop the development of these technologies by China."

According to Global Corporate Venturing data, US corporate venture capital investors backed just 48 China-based startup financings in 2022, a 48 percent decrease from 2021.

"It is inevitable that more foreign investment will pour into China in the medium term, seeking to cater to final demand locally rather than to produce and export to third-country markets from China," Gupta said.

Emotional return



Soldiers return home as part of a prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine on Tuesday in the Sumy Region, Ukraine. The two countries each exchanged 90 prisoners who were captured during their ongoing conflict, the Russian Defense Ministry said. The last swap between the two sides was at the end of May, when they exchanged 75 prisoners each. VLADA LIBEROVA VIA GETTY IMAGES

Gun violence declared public health crisis

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
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US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued a landmark advisory on Tuesday, declaring firearm violence in the United States a "public health crisis".

"Our failure to address it is a moral crisis. To protect the health and well-being of Americans, especially our children, we must now act with the clarity, courage and urgency that this moment demands," Murthy said in a video announcement posted on YouTube.

The advisory marked the first time the nation's leading voice on public health — the same office that in the 1960s highlighted the lethal consequences of cigarette smoking — has issued an urgent pronouncement on deaths related to firearms.

Murthy said the impetus for the advisory stems from the increase in gun violence, especially mass shootings since 2020, which he said exact a profound toll on the nation's well-being.

Murthy said in an interview with The Washington Post: "I know it's been polarizing, and I know it's been politicized, but if we can see it as a public health issue, we can come together and implement a public health solution."

While many applauded the advisory, gun rights groups and individuals attacked it with profanities in their social media posts.

The Firearm Policy Coalition also used profanities and called the advisory "a joke" under the headline "Second Amendment alert".

States continued to diverge on gun policy this year, with intense debate in the swing states that will decide the upcoming US presidential election.

According to a report released this month by the Pew Research Center, voters overall are divided over whether the increasing number of guns in the United States is good or bad for society: 52 percent

say it is very or somewhat bad, while 22 percent say it is good.

Perhaps no topic divides voters more deeply than the role that firearms have in US citizens' life, the report said.

Experts said mass shootings happening near election times often influence the nation's views on guns.

"If there are any particularly horrendous shootings in the months to come, that has a way of pushing the issue back to the forefront of the agenda," Robert Spitzer, a gun policy expert, was quoted as saying by Stateline.

In a fresh shooting, five people were killed and a teenage girl was critically injured in a shooting spree on Monday night in North Las Vegas, Nevada, and the suspect was arrested on Tuesday morning after a manhunt, local media reported, citing police.

Collective trauma, fear

Mass shootings and school shootings create collective trauma and fear, the advisory said.

It cited data from the Gun Violence Archive that the US experienced more than 600 mass shooting incidents each year between 2020 and 2023, up from an average of less than 400 annual

mass shootings between 2015 and 2018. A mass shooting is defined as an incident in which four or more victims are shot or killed.

As a result, 51 percent of US teens aged 14-17 said they worry about a shooting happening at school, and 79 percent of adults said they experienced stress from a possible mass shooting, while a third said the fear of a mass shooting kept them from going to certain public places or events.

Murthy said that firearm-related trauma and fear are contributing to mental health challenges. "Nearly 6 in 10 US adults say they worry about a loved one being a victim of firearm violence," he said.

The advisory compared US firearm violence with 28 other high-income nations and said that in 2015, the overall firearm-related death rate in age groups across the 29 countries was 11.4 times higher in the US.

Of all firearm-related incidents, active shootings result in a large number of deaths and injuries in one incident.

According to the FBI, such incidents are also on a sharp rise based on data from the past decade.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.



A vigil is held for the victims of a mass shooting on Oct 29 in Lewiston, Maine, which killed 18 people. MATT ROURKE / AP

Assange lands in Australia after plea

CANBERRA — WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange landed in Australia on Wednesday to an ecstatic welcome after pleading guilty to violating US espionage law in a deal that set him free from a decadelong legal battle.

Assange disembarked from a private jet at Canberra Airport just after 7:30 pm and waved to waiting media.

His arrival ends a decadelong legal saga in which Assange spent more than five years in the British high-security Belmarsh Prison and seven years in asylum at the Ecuadorian embassy in London battling extradition to Sweden on sexual assault allegations and to the United States, where he faced 18 criminal charges.

Assange was embroiled in a lengthy legal battle with the US government due to his role in acquiring and releasing classified military and diplomatic documents between 2009 and 2011. These files included hundreds of thousands of secret US military documents related to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

During a three-hour hearing in the US territory of Saipan, Assange pleaded guilty to one criminal count of conspiring to obtain and disclose classified national defense documents, but said he had believed the US Constitution's First Amendment, which protects free speech, shielded his activities.

"Working as a journalist, I encouraged my source to provide information that was said to be classified in order to publish that information," he told the court.

"I believed the First Amendment protected that activity, but I accept that it was ... a violation of the espionage statute."

Chief US District Judge Ramona V. Manglona accepted his guilty plea.

The US Justice Department agreed to conduct the hearing on the remote island, a US commonwealth in the Pacific, because Assange did not want to come to continental US.

His supporters viewed him as a brave journalist and whistleblower exposing government wrongdoing, while his critics share grave concerns about the potential harm caused by his leaks.

The deal with the US Justice Department concludes his 12-year legal ordeal. The Joe Biden administration's compromise to reach a deal with Assange came amid mounting pressure from the United Nations and allies such as Australia and Germany, all urging the US to drop the extradition and resolve the case promptly.

In February, the Australian Parliament passed a motion calling for Assange to be allowed to return to his home country. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he hoped for an amicable end to the prosecution.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Twin cities celebrate 44 years of friendly relations

By MINGMEI LI in New York
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Musical performances and speeches were among the activities at an event marking 44 years of Beijing and New York City's sister-city relationship at the Chinese Consulate General in New York on Monday.

More than 150 people participated in the event, aimed at enhancing city tourism, cultural exchange and economic cooperation.

"Welcome to New York, it's been waiting for you," lyrics from a song by popular US singer Taylor Swift could be heard at the event. The song has garnered more than a million streams across China's top three music platforms and highlighted New York's status as one of the most popular tourist destinations for Chinese travelers.

Just as New York is a "must-visit" destination in the United States for Chinese tourists, Beijing is likewise an important destination for US tourists visiting China. New York



Artists perform during the Beijing City Promotion and Beijing-New York Sister City Concert in New York on Monday. LIAO PAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

was the first US city to form a sister-city relationship with Beijing.

"Over the years, the two cities have enjoyed close economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and frequent interactions among the people. Together, the two cities have witnessed the development of our state-to-state relations, serving as a

model of friendly exchanges," Xia Linmao, executive vice-mayor of Beijing municipality, said.

He also noted previous cooperation and exchanges on music, including the strategic partnership between Beijing's National Center for the Performing Arts and New York's Carnegie Hall.

Those led to the establishment of the World Association for Performing Arts and tourist attractions like Universal Beijing Resort, jointly developed by New York City-based NBC Universal, which has attracted more than 20 million visitors since opening in 2021.

"These relationships between New York City and Beijing are a powerful example of how international cooperation can lead to shared success. Both cities benefit immensely from their collaborative spirit," Edward Mermelstein, commissioner for international affairs of New York City, said.

"Having Beijing and New York as sisters is even more interesting

because they're both dynamic and influential in their own ways," Gabriel, founder and CEO of Gab China, told China Daily.

"One of the things that I think that I love about America and China, what makes us the same is we're both very hardworking. I think that both Americans and Chinese are very interested and committed to trying their best to push, push their goals forward," she said.

Tourism and travel between Beijing and New York are resuming, with 27 direct flights from Beijing to major US cities each week, including five weekly flights from Beijing to New York.

Briefly

NATO Dutch PM appointed new secretary-general

NATO on Wednesday appointed the outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte as the alliance's next secretary-general, the bloc said in a statement. Rutte will take over on Oct 1 from Jens Stoltenberg of Norway, who is stepping down after a decade in the post. On June 19, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis officially announced his withdrawal from the race for NATO's secretary-general. Consequently, Rutte has gained the support of all 32 member countries.

UNITED KINGDOM King Charles welcomes Japanese emperor

Britain's King Charles III welcomed Japan's Emperor Naruhito and his wife to London with a Buckingham Palace banquet on Tuesday, celebrating economic, diplomatic and cultural ties on the first day of a three-day state visit. The emperor's trip, postponed from 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, seeks to deepen military, cultural and scientific links between the two countries. Emperor Naruhito studied in the UK in the early 1980s.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Wishing President of Peru Dina Boluarte great success during her visit to China



SUMMER DAVOS IN DALIAN

Share new energy, say speakers

Experts, officials see fresh scope for renegotiating EU-China investment pact

By CHENG YU and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning

New energy development should be shared and the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment should be renegotiated for mutual benefit, said prominent industry experts and former top government officials at the ongoing 15th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the Summer Davos Forum.

Their remarks come at a time when China, the world's second-largest economy, has been subjected

to protectionist policies by its major trade partners, including the United States and the European Union, in the new energy sector.

Zeng Yuqun, founder of Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd, the world's largest electric vehicle battery maker, said countries can benefit from new energy by sharing the industry chain.

He proposed what he called a sharing model. Companies can expand their production capacity intelligently, by installing it across the world – for example, 30 percent in Africa that boasts resources, 40 percent in China that has the most intense technology and investment efficiency, and the rest in the US or Europe, which have big markets.

“Through such a sharing model, all countries and regions would benefit and the geopolitical tensions like the tariffs would be left behind ... Because, climate change and sus-

tainability are so important for each one of them,” he said.

Zeng said CATL has already taken some measures to diversify its overseas market share and is willing to share its technology with every country in the world, including those in the EU, South Korea and the US.

The European Commission said earlier this month it would impose additional duties of up to 38.1 percent on imported Chinese electric vehicles from next month.

As the EU and China have agreed to negotiate, Wan Gang, former minister of science and technology, suggested that the EU should also consider renegotiating the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China, instead of going ahead with the proposed higher tariffs.

The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment was reached in December 2020 to facilitate

trade and investment between European and Chinese companies. Under the agreement, EU firms can get better access to emerging sectors like new energy in China. But the European Parliament voted to freeze the agreement's ratification in May 2021.

“It is necessary for the two sides to negotiate properly to move forward together toward economic globalization. Renegotiating the CAI could be an opportunity,” said Wan, who is also the president of the China Association for Science and Technology.

The Chinese authorities said at the Summer Davos Forum on Tuesday that given the current bleak global economic growth scenario, countries that prioritize maximizing their own interests without considering the interests of others, or even backtrack by promoting decoupling and erecting barriers, will drag the world into a vicious cycle of compet-



John Quelch, executive vice-chancellor of Duke Kunshan University, speaks at a forum on the development of new energy vehicles during the Summer Davos Forum in Dalian on Wednesday.
ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

ing for a diminishing pie.

Wan said there is “common consensus” all over the world on developing NEVs, and such a trend is unstoppable. “China will not slow down the development of NEVs just because of some twists and turns. China's auto market is already highly globalized.”

According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers,

China exported 1.2 million NEVs in 2023, up nearly 78 percent.

Among such NEVs, around 30 percent are from Tesla's Shanghai factory, Wan noted, adding that a large number of the cars produced last year were from joint ventures of Chinese and foreign companies.

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JinkoSolar firm on operations abroad

By ZHENG XIN and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning

JinkoSolar, the world's largest solar panel producer by shipments, said it will press ahead with overseas expansion plans despite the current geopolitical and “overcapacity” challenges, and actively develop its energy storage business to further facilitate a global energy transition.

Even though concerns persist over so-called solar panel overcapacity, which has trimmed the returns of Chinese solar firms, the company believes the most advanced capacity will always remain in demand, while low-end overlapping capacity will always be

in surplus, said Qian Jing, vice-president of JinkoSolar, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, or 2024 Summer Davos.

Qian said the government's recent commitment to limit “low-end” solar panel manufacturing following a representation by industry leaders earlier this month, will better regulate the industry toward a more sustainable development.

The National Energy Administration has vowed to guide capacity expansions and avoid redundant investments, monitoring solar factory utilization and expansion plans to help improve market conditions, in response to solar companies' requests seeking

Beijing's intervention after a surge in capacity.

The growth of solar power over the past two decades has been phenomenal, from a niche sector to the world's dominant source of new energy. China and the global market still show strong demand prospects for clean energy, prompting the solar industry's top players to further expand high-efficiency capacity in the long term.

Qian attributed the recent “overcapacity” to investments in the previous years and capital market enthusiasm. Over the long term, she sees an industry shake-out – which is expected to eliminate lagging low-end capacity – as being beneficial for JinkoSolar, as

the company has been stepping up efforts in research and development, investing billions of dollars in technological innovation.

With low-end capacity set to be eliminated, the company is confident about its market share rising to 20 percent in 2024 from last year's 15 percent, further consolidating its position at home and abroad, she said.

The company currently operates three overseas factories, in Malaysia, Vietnam and the United States. It is in the process of evaluating its fourth plant abroad, which is most likely to be located in the Middle East, as it enjoys better credit, sufficient financing resources, stable conditions, policy support and an ambitious market, she said. JinkoSolar's commitment toward long-term strategic overseas expansion

remains unchanged, while it will also stay cautious when choosing the site, taking into consideration technological standards, costs and competitiveness, she said.

According to Qian, while the current cost of solar power has fallen below that of coal-fired power, the renewable energy source will only become absolutely competitive when the combined cost of solar and energy storage is equal to that of coal-fired electricity.

“Renewable energy's intermittency can only be fully addressed when energy storage costs are on par with coal-fired power. JinkoSolar is significantly investing in energy storage, which is the company's second-largest growth sector,” she said.

New energy storage, or energy storage using new technologies such as lithium-ion batteries, liq-

uid flow batteries, compressed air and mechanical energy, is an important foundation for building a new power system in China, enjoying the advantages of quick response, flexible configuration and short construction periods.

JinkoSolar aims to become the world's leading energy storage company within the next three to five years.

The nation's energy storage capacity further expanded in the first quarter of 2024 amid efforts to advance its green energy transition, with installed new-type energy storage capacity reaching 35.3 gigawatts by end-March, soaring 2.1 times year-on-year, according to the National Energy Administration.

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China to push ahead with 5G-A deployments

By MA SI masi@chinadaily.com.cn

China will step up efforts to commercialize 5G Advanced, or 5G-A, technologies, which will help accelerate the application of artificial intelligence in more sectors and pave the way for identifying key 6G technologies, officials and company executives said on Wednesday.

The comments came as 2024 marks the commercial launch of 5G-A technology, which is a crucial upgrade to the 5G network in functionality and coverage. For instance, 5G-A features 10-gigabit peak downlink speeds to meet increasingly diverse service requirements.

Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Mobile World Congress Shanghai that it is highly important to deepen the integration of 5G with new-generation information technologies, especially AI.

He also highlighted the need to leverage 5G to empower emerging industries such as intelligent connected vehicles and the low-altitude economy. The deployment of integrated sensing and passive internet of things technologies is essential for scenarios involving ubiquitous connectivity and high-end manufacturing.

Meanwhile, Zhao also called for more efforts to accelerate the research and development of key 6G technologies, laying a solid foundation for future 6G standards and industry development.



A visitor tries out VR products at the 2024 Mobile World Congress in Shanghai. CHEN AIPING / XINHUA

As of end-May, China had made remarkable strides in 5G infrastructure, with a total of 3.837 million 5G base stations, accounting for 60 percent of the global total. These advancements have positioned China as a global leader in 5G technology, with over 50 percent of mobile communication users in the country now utilizing 5G services, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Meanwhile, China has achieved over 94,000 5G application cases in industries such as manufacturing, mining, power, ports and healthcare, the ministry added.

Chen Zhongyue, chairman of China Unicom, emphasized the importance of building a smart computing network, advancing the next-generation integrated intelligent sensing and computing internet, and maximizing computing power value.

Enhancing core capabilities of its self-developed large language model, roughly translated as Yuanjing, is also a key objective, Chen said.

The company has developed 30 industry-specific Yuanjing models

with professional skills, he added.

These models have significantly benefited urban governance, economic operations, information consumption and industrial manufacturing. For example, the Yuanjing clothing model can reduce design time from three days to three seconds, he said.

“We aim to introduce AI tools that are both technologically advanced and user-friendly, providing intelligent services that resonate with human values,” Chen said.

Yang Jie, chairman of China Mobile, underscored AI's potential to become a new information service gateway and said the company plans to integrate expertise from various fields to launch AI intelligent systems in healthcare, education and entertainment.

Moreover, the company is set to develop AI solutions for key industries like manufacturing, energy and transportation, fostering intelligent and green industrial advancements, Yang said.

Collaborating with industry partners, China Mobile aims to acceler-

ate the development of humanoid robots and brain-computer interfaces, enhancing the future needs of the economy and society, he added.

Wang Tao, executive director of Huawei Technologies Co, said over 60 telecom operators and partners globally have announced the arrival of the 5G-A commercial year, with over 30 devices supporting 5G-A set to launch this year, marking a significant milestone in the digital era.

Wang emphasized that 5G-A is a definitive industry path that protects existing investments while creating new business opportunities. He called for continuous enhancement of 5G-A technology to sustain the health and vitality of the 5G industry, realizing the vision of 5G transforming society.

As 5G-A accelerates its commercial deployment, AI brings new opportunities for the telecommunications industry. Wang said that “2024 marks the convergence of the 5G-A commercial year and the AI-to-device year, heralding the mobile AI era where intelligent services become ubiquitous.”

‘Patient capital’ seen as key to sci-tech self-reliance

By ZHOU LANXU zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

With more policy support on the horizon, State-backed funds are expected to play a leading role in China's efforts to develop “patient capital” that is needed to strengthen technological self-reliance, officials said on Wednesday.

“We will first nurture State-owned enterprises' funds and government investment funds into ‘patient capital’, which will play a leading role by setting an example,” said Li Chunlin, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission.

“Patient capital” refers to investment that generates healthy returns over the long run rather than taking quick profits. The term has become a buzz phrase after a top-level meeting in April stressed that it is essential to actively develop venture capital investment and strengthen patient capital.

At a news conference on Wednesday, Li stressed that patient capital is crucial for sci-tech self-reliance as many disruptive innovations do not generate fast investment returns in the early stage.

To develop patient capital, it is important to both fully respect the role of the market and leverage the government's function, Li said, adding the State Council, China's Cabinet, has called for measures to assist investment funds that are funded by the government and SOEs in acting as patient capital.

The General Office of the State Council unveiled a document on June 19 containing 17 sets of measures to promote the high-quality development of the venture capital sector. The document required efforts to improve fund perform-

ance evaluation and introduce fault tolerance for VC funds that are funded by the government and SOEs.

Wang Hailin, an official from the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, said the anticipated measures will include relaxing fund size limits, raising the proportion of investments by centrally administered SOEs, focusing on the evaluation of long-term investment return and defining conditions for exemption from liability for due diligence.

She said the commission will also encourage centrally administered SOEs to fully utilize existing policies and make long-term investments in early-stage, small-size, high-tech companies to aid the development of strategic emerging industries and nurture new quality productive forces.

Official data showed that China's centrally administered SOEs so far have managed 126 VC funds with a total size of 52.9 billion yuan (\$7.28 billion), having invested 31.3 billion yuan in sectors like advanced manufacturing, energy, electronics and information.

Li said China will also strengthen patient capital by encouraging insurance companies to invest more in VC funds and expanding the pilots where banks' financial asset investment companies can make equity investment.

Wu Meng, head of the China Securities Regulatory Commission's Department of Market Supervision II, said the commission is supporting the VC sector through measures such as facilitating mergers and acquisitions, piloting return distribution to VC investors in kind instead of in cash and ensuring smooth channels for overseas listings.

Briefly

Bohai Oilfield has a new deep well

Bohai Oilfield, China's largest offshore crude oil production base, has

completed drilling of a new 6,088-meter-deep well, China National Offshore Oil Corp Tianjin branch said. The well, Bohai 19-6-D1, will be used for oil and gas recovery of the

Bozhong 19-6 Condensate Gas Field, the first gas field with proven reserves of over 100 billion cubic meters of natural gas in the Bohai Sea.

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

The People's Bank of China, China's central bank, conducted 250 billion

yuan (\$35.2 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Wednesday. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from

commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

BUSINESS

INFRASTRUCTURE

Urban rejuvenation in Shanghai gathers pace

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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Shanghai has undertaken a regeneration campaign that includes transforming urban villages and renovating blighted areas. By turning the city's largest urban village in its downtown area into an iconic project, China State Construction Engineering Corp, or CSCEC, has shown how urban renovation can reshape the city, sources said.

Gui Zhihua, head of Hongqi village's economic organization, said he never imagined that the smelly and messy market through which he had to wear rain boots and hold his nose to pass every day during his childhood could become a bustling business district of high-rises one day.

Hongqi village is one of Shanghai's largest urban villages situated in northwestern Putuo district, and it had all the problems of a poor-quality settlement about a decade ago.

Occupying an area of 586 *mu* (39.1 hectares), Hongqi village used to be home to nine large primary markets (including a fruit market and wet market), 90 printing houses, 207 cold storage warehouses, more than 1,000 stalls, and a mobile population of more than 60,000 people, said Zhao Weimao, project director for Hongqi village at the Shanghai company of China Overseas Land and Investment Ltd (COLI).

While Gui and his villagers thought they would have to live in the filthy and messy place forever,



An aerial image shows Max City, an urban lifestyle complex developed by China Overseas Land and Investment Ltd, in a redeveloped area of Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

rapid changes started to take place in 2018 as COLI, a subsidiary of Beijing-based CSCEC, decided to invest some 30 billion yuan (\$4.13 billion) to regenerate this area.

In five years, a mega complex with a gross floor area of about 1 million square meters was erected, consisting of residential properties, office buildings, shopping malls, theaters, parks and long-term rental apartments.

The successful renewal of Hongqi village represents a microcosm of Shanghai's rapid urban renovation over the past few years.

Among the 49 urban village renovation projects approved between 2014 and 2020, 40 have been completed, benefiting 23,815 households, and four out of the 13 new projects approved from 2021 to 2022 have completed renovation, improving the living conditions of 2,900 households, according to local news portal Shanghai Observer.

A further 30 new transformation projects will be launched in three years from 2023, and are projected

to benefit at least 13,000 households.

Amid the rapid urban renovation, COLI announced a grand plan to turn one of the city's old downtown neighborhoods into a new landmark.

The project, known as East Jianguo Road project, is located in Shanghai's Huangpu district in the city center.

Taking up an area of 147,500 square meters, the project involves the relocation of 8,500 households and about 40,000 people.

"Before the relocation, this area was the largest old neighborhood in Huangpu district, housing about 10,000 families without modern toilets, which means people had to clean the wooden toilet every day," said Jin Tian, general manager of COLI Shanghai.

Sitting in the core area of Shanghai's Huangpu district, the project is close to the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China and adjacent to the city's landmark Xintiandi in the north.

Apart from the giant redevelopment area of about 400,000 square meters (gross floor area), another challenge of the project was to preserve and renew 13 historical buildings, which requires protection of the urban fabric and inheriting the historical culture while renovating, said Jin.

Since 2020, COLI has invested nearly 60 billion yuan in the project, trying to rebuild the area into a landmark equivalent to Xintiandi, Jin said.

Shanghai is among the first batch of cities nationwide receiving financial support from the Finance Ministry for urban regeneration, according to a notice on the official website of the ministry.

The cities will receive a certain amount of subsidies in accordance with their location, and Shanghai will receive a total subsidy of no more than 1.2 billion yuan, according to the notice jointly issued by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in April.

3-way FTA talks back on agenda

China-Japan-S. Korea pact may hinge on navigating geopolitical challenges

By WANG KEJU
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After a hiatus of over four years, negotiations for the China-Japan-South Korea Free Trade Agreement have returned to the table, with the focus on a higher level of liberalization that goes beyond the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, particularly in areas such as automobiles and key components, analysts said.

However, closing the three-way trade pact might not be an easy feat as the three nations will have to navigate the complexities and challenges stemming from geopolitical tensions and other issues, they cautioned.

Negotiations for the FTA have stalled since 2019, but the elusive trade deal was cast into the spotlight again in late May at a trilateral summit — the first in four years — attended by leaders from China, Japan, and South Korea in Seoul.

"We will keep discussions for speeding up negotiations for a trilateral free trade agreement," they said in a joint statement after the summit, stressing a deal that would be "free, fair, comprehensive, high-quality, and beneficial for all."

The FTA, first proposed in 2002, represents one of the most substantial economic partnerships China engages in, with a high proportion of China's foreign trade involved. The negotiations began in November 2012 and lasted for 16 rounds until 2019.

Trade between the three countries has surged from some \$130 billion in 1999 to nearly \$800 billion in 2022, with China emerging as the top trading partner for both Japan and South Korea.

China is the primary source of imports for Japan and South Korea, and stands as the largest export destination for South Korea and the second largest for Japan.

While China and South Korea signed a bilateral FTA in 2015, no FTAs have been reached between China and Japan or between Japan and South Korea, said Cui Fan, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

This has resulted in a trade ratio within the China-Japan-South Korea region that has struggled to surpass 20 percent, significantly lower than the 64 percent within the European Union, 50 percent within the region under the North American Free Trade Agreement, and 24 percent within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Cui added.

The RCEP pact has been fully implemented for a year, heralding the first-ever free trade agreement in which China, Japan, and South Korea participate. Alongside these three nations, the mega trade pact includes the 10 member states of the ASEAN, as well as Australia

and New Zealand.

The three nations, during the 14th round of negotiations in 2018, proposed to build upon the achievements of the RCEP and explore ways to further enhance the levels of trade and investment liberalization within the region.

The ongoing negotiations for a trilateral trade agreement are primarily centered around surpassing the levels of tariffs and rules established by the RCEP, said Ni Yueju, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics.

Under the RCEP framework, 86 percent of products exported from Japan to China and 88 percent of products exported from China to Japan will eventually attract zero tariffs, Ni said.

While this represents a substantial improvement compared to previous levels, the figures still fall short of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, which boasts a 98 percent zero-tariff ratio, and also fall behind the 95 percent zero-tariff ratio achieved under the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, Ni added.

Additionally, the negotiations aim to address areas that RCEP does not cover, such as the automotive sector and certain automotive components, Ni said, adding that the agricultural sector will emerge as a sensitive area due to the strong agricultural lobbies in Japan and South Korea cautious about opening their domestic markets to increased competition.

The high degree of interconnectivity within the industrial chains and strong economic complementarity among China, Japan, and South Korea is paving the way for a three-way trade pact, said He Yadong, spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce.

Once achieved, this agreement is expected to further expand market openness, reduce trade barriers, enhance trade and investment, and improve the business environment, bringing tangible benefits to businesses and people across the three nations, He added.

That said, in recent years, competition between China and Japan, as well as South Korea, has intensified, particularly in the fields of high-end manufacturing and advanced technology. Negotiations in these areas involve the core interests of each country, making coordination more challenging, analysts said.

The global and regional geopolitical landscape, including factors such as the shifting dynamics of power, the China-US trade conflict, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and US restrictions on Chinese technology, have all contributed to the challenges faced in reaching a consensus in the negotiations, said Ni.

Infrastructure investment to speed ahead in Q3

By ZHUANG QIANG
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Investments in infrastructure are expected to accelerate in the third quarter, supported by increased local bond issuances, market analysts said.

The comments came as the finance department of Fujian province said recently its government debt quota would increase by 182.4 billion yuan (\$25.1 billion) this year, or 3.7 percent higher than the previous year. This signifies the allocation of the second batch of new government debt quotas for 2024.

Of the increase, 168.4 billion yuan has been earmarked for special bonds and will be used to achieve faster completion of major existing projects, the finance department said in an online statement.

According to market tracker Wind Info, as of Tuesday, local governments have issued a total of 3.3 trillion yuan in government bonds this year, including 1.35 trillion yuan in new special bonds.

"With the national quota for new local government special bonds being 3.9 trillion yuan — an increase of 100 billion yuan from the previous year — the issuance progress in the first half of the year has been less than 50 percent. The second half will hence see faster and more frequent issuance by local governments," said Long Chaocan, an

investment consultant with China Galaxy Securities Co Ltd.

According to plans that have so far been released by multiple local governments, effective investment is highlighted in enhancing the efficiency of bond fund usage. Authorities are promoting investment for key existing projects that "can quickly translate into tangible work after relocation" to stabilize growth momentum amid the nation's pursuit of high-quality development, Long said.

"Under-construction infrastructure projects, such as railways and major water conservancies, are receiving major fund support during the rest of the year, considering their role is still fundamental in driving the nation's economy amid headwinds," he added.

China has scaled up investment in railway construction since the beginning of the year, the country's railway operator said.

During the January-May period, fixed-asset investment in the country's railway sector reached 228.47 billion yuan, marking a 10.8 percent increase from the same period last year, according to China State Railway Group. The investment is up from 184.9 billion yuan in the first four months of this year.

Heeding the nation's call to boost integrated regional development, railway construction nationwide continued to gather steam nationwide, as



A view of the Wubailing Tunnel on the Jinhua-Jiande High-speed Railway in Zhejiang province that was bored through by China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp recently. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

reflected by the latest project milestones reported by State builders.

China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp (CR24G), a unit of China Railway Construction Corp, said it had started drilling the foundations for two major bridges across the Dongyang River and Wuyi River in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, marking the start of substantial construction for the Jinhua railway hub expansion project.

This expansion is Jinhua's largest-ever local railway investment and aims to alleviate capacity issues on the Jinhua-Yiwu sector along the Shanghai-Kunming High-speed Railway and boost regional transport infrastructure.

Also in the East China province, the Wubailing Tunnel on the Jinhua-Jiande High-speed Railway was bored through recently by CR24G construc-

tion workers. Successful digging of the 2.4-kilometer tunnel marks a significant progress toward its scheduled opening, the State builder said.

Located in Jiande, Zhejiang, the dual-track tunnel, with its maximum depth reaching 185 meters, is built for trains running at a designed speed of 250 kilometers per hour. Overcoming complex geological challenges, the project team employed advanced geological forecasting and strict safety measures to ensure controlled, high-quality construction.

Connecting the three cities of Jinhua, Lanxi and Jiande with China's major railway network, the Jinhua-Jiande High-speed Railway, which is scheduled to open before October 2025, aims to help cities further develop tourism and provide a faster link between Zhejiang and inland provinces.

Cathay flying high on air cargo surge

By ZHU WENQIAN
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Hong Kong carrier Cathay Pacific Airways said it will continue to increase cargo capacity of flights connecting the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and overseas destinations, fueled by continuously growing demand for transporting e-commerce products.

The primary driver of its cargo business growth has been transporting e-commerce products from Guangdong province and Shanghai to overseas markets, and about 50 percent of cargo revenue comes from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-

Macao Greater Bay Area, the carrier said.

With more overseas customers buying products from Chinese e-commerce platforms, transporting e-commerce products now accounts for 50 to 60 percent of the cargo business from Hong Kong to other destinations, significantly higher than the 20 percent seen not long ago.

"We believe that demand for transporting e-commerce products from China will continue to grow, and it is expected to become a long-term trend. Such demand in other parts of the world is softer," said Tom Owen, director of cargo at Cathay Pacific Airways.

"Cathay cargo's future is tightly con-

nected with China, and we are very optimistic about the future growth potential. China's economy is still growing at a strong rate compared with the rest of the world. As people get more wealthy, they want to get better products, and it will make air cargo more important," Owen said.

With a freight facility in Dongguan, Guangdong, Cathay cargo has made it less expensive and more efficient for Chinese mainland customers to transport goods overseas, as they can clear Customs in the Chinese mainland without having to complete anything in Hong Kong.

The facility, in its first year of pilot operations, stands as a long-term

project and is expected to see continuously growing demand in the months ahead, Owen said.

Currently, Cathay cargo connects 16 Chinese mainland destinations with Hong Kong. Fueled by growing demand in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Zhengzhou, Henan province, the carrier has been increasing flight frequencies over the past six months and will continue to do so.

With a fleet of 20 Boeing B747 freighters, coupled with bellyhold cargo capacities from 190 passenger aircraft, the carrier has announced the purchase of six new Airbus A350F freighters, and signed a purchase option for 20 more A350F freighters.

"The new freighters are expected to be put into long-haul routes connecting the Chinese mainland and

Hong Kong with the United States, Europe and Australia," Owen said.

Hong Kong International Airport, the world's busiest cargo transportation hub, is expanding into a three-runway system, which will increase its passenger and cargo capacity to handle 120 million passengers and 10 million metric tons of cargo annually.

In the first five months, Cathay cargo saw total demand, measured in cargo ton-kilometers, up 10 percent year-on-year. Its cargo transportation capacity has recovered rapidly and resumed to 85 percent of pre-COVID levels, and the capacity of Cathay Group is expected to fully rebound in the first quarter of 2025.

Meanwhile, as Chinese consumers have been pursuing increasingly high-quality lifestyles and premium products, inbound demand for fresh

products like flowers and imported fruits has been growing, especially in Guangdong, Cathay Pacific said.

Asia-Pacific airlines saw 14 percent year-on-year demand growth for air cargo in April, the strongest of all regions, according to the latest data from the International Air Transport Association.

Demand within the Asia market grew by 13.2 percent compared to April 2023, and the Asia-Europe route grew by 17.7 percent. The Middle East-Asia route rose by 10.4 percent, the IATA said.

"Air cargo demand started the second quarter with a solid 11.1 percent increase globally. While many uncertainties remain, it appears that the roots of air cargo's strong performance are deepening," said Willie Walsh, IATA's director-general.

BUSINESSFOCUS

By ZHU WENQIAN
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Chinese parents are booking more domestic and outbound research as well as study tours this summer compared to the same period last year, and the market is set to embrace a golden period of growth, industry players said.

However, parents have become more cautious while choosing research and educational travel products, and are paying more attention to quality, said Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

The United Kingdom, the United States and Singapore are the most popular destinations for research and study tours. Such trips mainly include taking international classes abroad, and in-depth tours of museums and famous universities.

In addition to time-tested experiences of visiting renowned universities in Europe and the US, some niche destinations in northern Europe that focus on natural landscape sightseeing, such as Finland and Norway, have also become popular for research and learning trips this summer, Qunar found.

More parents are choosing routes that emphasize humanities, history, nature, and aesthetic education, as well as projects that are highly experiential and interactive.

People born in the 1980s and 1990s — young parents now — are the main consumer groups in the parent-child travel market, and they are more willing to pay for high-quality parent-child travel experiences, industry observers said.

“For example, participating in a turtle conservation project in Bali, Indonesia, and an elephant conservation project in Thailand, have seen significant increases in bookings this year. Since children can do something by themselves, this makes it more meaningful,” said Yan Lanru, director of research and study tours at Qunar.

“For domestic study trips, several travel agencies have launched cultural tours equipped with experienced research mentors and experts in Xi’an, Shaanxi province. They will help children deeply experience and understand the culture and historical heritage of the ancient capital,” Yan said.

The per capita cost of domestic research tour products has declined by 10 percent this summer compared with the pre-pandemic level of 2019, but the per capita cost of such tours overseas has increased by about 40 percent over 2019, data from Trip.com Group, China’s largest online travel agency, showed.

Summer vacation is the peak season for parent-child travel. Last summer, Chinese consumers undertook trips amounting to some 1.84 billion person-times, significantly higher than during the same period of 2019, or before the COVID-19 pandemic, and many scenic spots received a record number of tourists, according to the China Tourism Academy.

Based on summer travel product orders so far, nearly half of the tourists who plan to travel domestically are families with children, and this group accounts for 53 percent of the total for outbound travel, according to Trip.com.

Among those that have booked travel products this summer, consumers born in the 1980s and 1990s form the backbone, and each accounts for 50 percent and 18 percent of the total, respectively, Trip.com said.

“Bookings made by those who were born after the year 2000 grew the fastest, and the booking volume has jumped about 80 percent year-on-year, indicating that students are playing an increasingly important role in the summer tourism market,” said Fang Zexi, an industry analyst at the research institute of Trip.com.

Parent-child tourism takes off in big way

Bookings for domestic and outbound research as well as study tours surpass levels seen last year



Top: Visitors flock to Marina Bay in Singapore in April. ZHENG ZHIWEI / XINHUA
Above: Tourists check out the Macao Special Administrative Region’s famous tourist spot, the Ruins of Saint Paul’s, in May. ZHANG JINJIA / XINHUA

Trips to Europe hot draws in summer season

By ZHU WENQIAN

Chinese travelers have shown great enthusiasm for trips to Europe this summer, fueled by sporting events like the UEFA Euro 2024 and the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, industry players said.

In fact, travel to Paris is forecast to accelerate in the coming weeks, they said.

Following a strong surge in visits during the May Day and Dragon Boat Festival holidays, China’s outbound tourism market is expected to show greater resilience.

Bookings to France and Germany have shown the highest year-on-year growth, according to data from online travel agencies.

Search volumes for travel to Germany for 2024, which began on June 15, have tripled this month over the levels seen in May. In particular, search volumes for travel to Berlin, the host city of the UEFA Euro 2024 finals that will be held on July 14, have

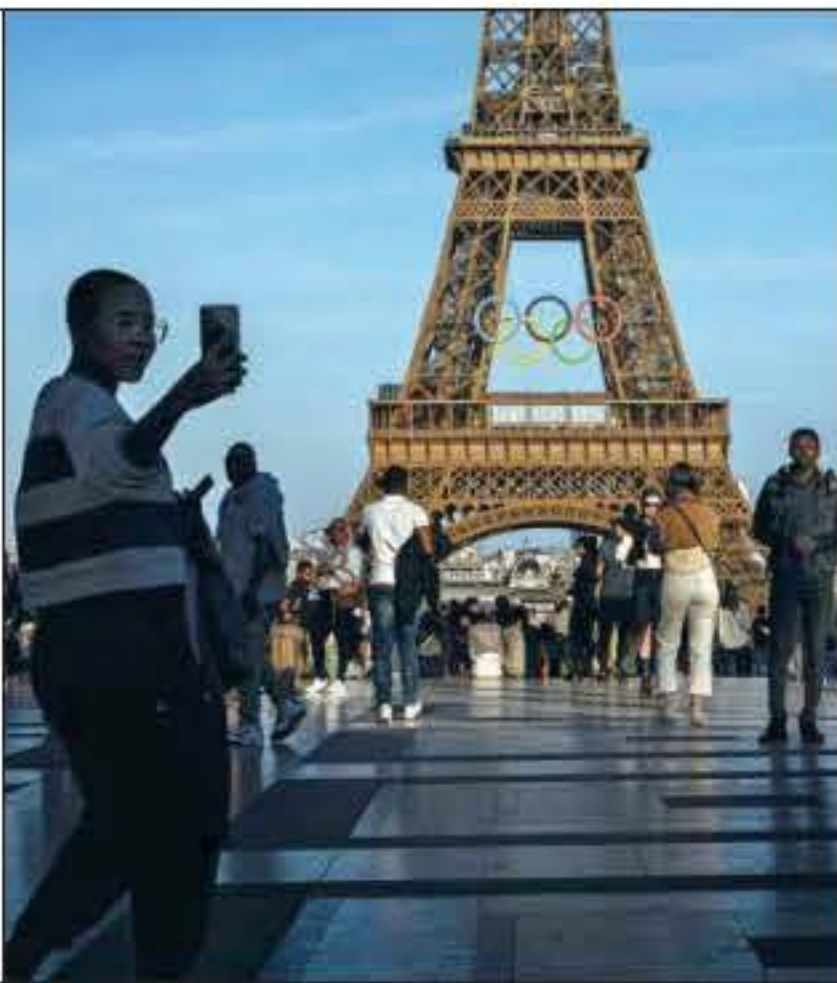
climbed week by week, according to Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

Booking volumes for international flights to Germany during the UEFA Euro 2024 have doubled over the same period last year, Qunar found.

Besides, booking volumes for hotels in Germany have jumped 150 percent year-on-year, and average room prices have climbed 25 percent on a yearly basis. Specifically, bookings for hotels in Berlin have surged 400 percent year-on-year, followed by that for Munich and Frankfurt.

“The football matches have also driven the popularity of Chinese travelers visiting other European countries. Till the end of July, hotel bookings for Italy have tripled over last year, and France, Spain, and the United Kingdom have seen their hotel booking volumes double year-on-year,” said Xiao Peng, a researcher with the big data research institute of Qunar.

“Europe has always been a popular desti-



People photograph and film the Olympic rings displayed on the Eiffel Tower in Paris on June 7.

AURELIEN MORISSARD / FOR CHINA DAILY

nation for summer travel by Chinese tourists. This year, Germany’s hosting of the UEFA Euro 2024 has attracted more sports and tourism fans,” Xiao said.

Prices of international flights to Europe and local hotels are expected to increase by 30 percent to 40 percent from July.

Meanwhile, Paris will host the Olympic Games from July 24 to Aug 11. This period coincides with the peak season for outbound travel in China and is set to significantly hike the popularity of tourism in France, industry players said.

Paris and other major cities in France, as well as Berlin, London, and Madrid have seen the highest increases in travel product bookings in Europe, according to Tongcheng Travel, an online travel agency based in Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

As of the first two weeks of June, booking volumes of flights from major Chinese cities to Paris for July had jumped more than 70 percent year-on-year, and hotel bookings in

Paris for next month had surged 150 percent on a yearly basis, data from Tongcheng Travel showed.

Most Chinese tourists who plan to visit Paris this summer are from Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Guangdong province, Chengdu, Sichuan province, and Hong Kong.

Family travel is forecast to grow significantly, and the Paris Olympics will be the first choice for many Chinese families.

Some popular options for group tours of 10 to 12 days to Europe this summer carry price tags of over 30,000 yuan (\$4,132) per person. Boosted by strong demand, some travel routes have been sold out, according to Tongcheng Travel.

Besides, some Chinese travelers are choosing to fly to Paris and join a local tour group for three to seven days. The demand for Mandarin-speaking tour guides and chartered car services in Paris has also been growing.

Editor's note: An array of Chinese cities have maintained their cultural memories in the form of historical neighborhoods that have only ad where President Xi Jinping has left his footsteps and remarked on the preservation and vitalization of heritage. In this installment, we follow local people

A TRULY EXHILARATING

Centuries-old Barkhor Bazaar traces an eye-catching path through shared

Drop in on the Woser Gamchung Tea House on the first floor of a four-story compound building on popular Barkhor Bazaar in the old town of Lhasa in the Xizang autonomous region at around 2 pm, and you may be surprised to find that the time-honored spot, known for its Tibetan sweet tea, is still bustling with customers.

Some are tourists, curious to have a cup or two of sweet tea, while the rest are local residents addicted to this traditional brew, and who stay for hours, chatting, and ordering one cup after another to accompany plates of local delicacies.

Among the staff busy serving and greeting loyal customers is Penba, manager of the Woser Gamchung Tea House.

"There are even more people on weekends," he says, raising his voice a bit to be heard above the hustle and bustle. "We sell up to 11,000 cups a day."

Tibetan sweet tea, which is made using black tea and powdered milk, is a must for many local residents as they begin or complete their day, and many of them visit tea houses of repute, such as the one Penba manages.

He says when the tea shop opened in 1978, it only served between 30 and 40 people a day and some customers described it as being "as small as a box".

Business began to grow about 20 years ago as increasing numbers of tourists, business owners, migrant workers and other customers also began to drop in and join local residents for a cup of sweet tea. Consequently, the tea house had to expand.

Today, a relaxing moment and a cup of sweet tea at the Woser Gamchung is on the to-do list for many spending their time on the 1,300-year-old street, the evolution of which was linked to the construction of another landmark, the Jokhang Temple.

First built in the seventh century, the temple has undergone numerous renovations and expansions to become the complex it is today.

In 821, the central government of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the

Tubo regime, which ruled the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau from the seventh to the ninth centuries, formed an alliance. Two years later, that alliance was recorded on a stele in both Chinese and Tibetan script that was erected outside the Jokhang Temple. The Tang-Tubo Alliance Monument, as it is known, chronicles the history of that alliance between the Han and Tibetan ethnic groups.

A circumambulation path for pilgrims formed around the Jokhang Temple and gradually expanded into prosperous Barkhor Bazaar. Throughout the ages, the extended area has been a bustling center of commerce, and is home to multiple cultural, artistic and religious venues, as well as residential compounds.

The area centered on Barkhor Bazaar and its neighboring alleys and courtyards is known as the Old City of Barkhor.

Meanwhile, Barkhor Bazaar has been marked by the stamp of joint development among the different ethnic groups of Xizang.

In July 2021, President Xi Jinping visited the street during his tour of the autonomous region, during which he inquired about the development of tourism, cultural and creative industries, and the protection of Tibetan cultural heritage in specialty stores.

"I visited this street 23 years ago. Today it is truly flourishing. The (more than) 1,000-year-old Barkhor Bazaar was jointly built by China's various ethnic groups. Cultures of different ethnic groups have come into contact, communicated, and blended here. It is a place where all members of the Chinese nation have realized happy and harmonious relations," President Xi said.

In addition to the Tang-Tubo Alliance Monument, the street is also home to dozens of examples of historical architecture, including the former office of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) government's grand minister in Xizang.

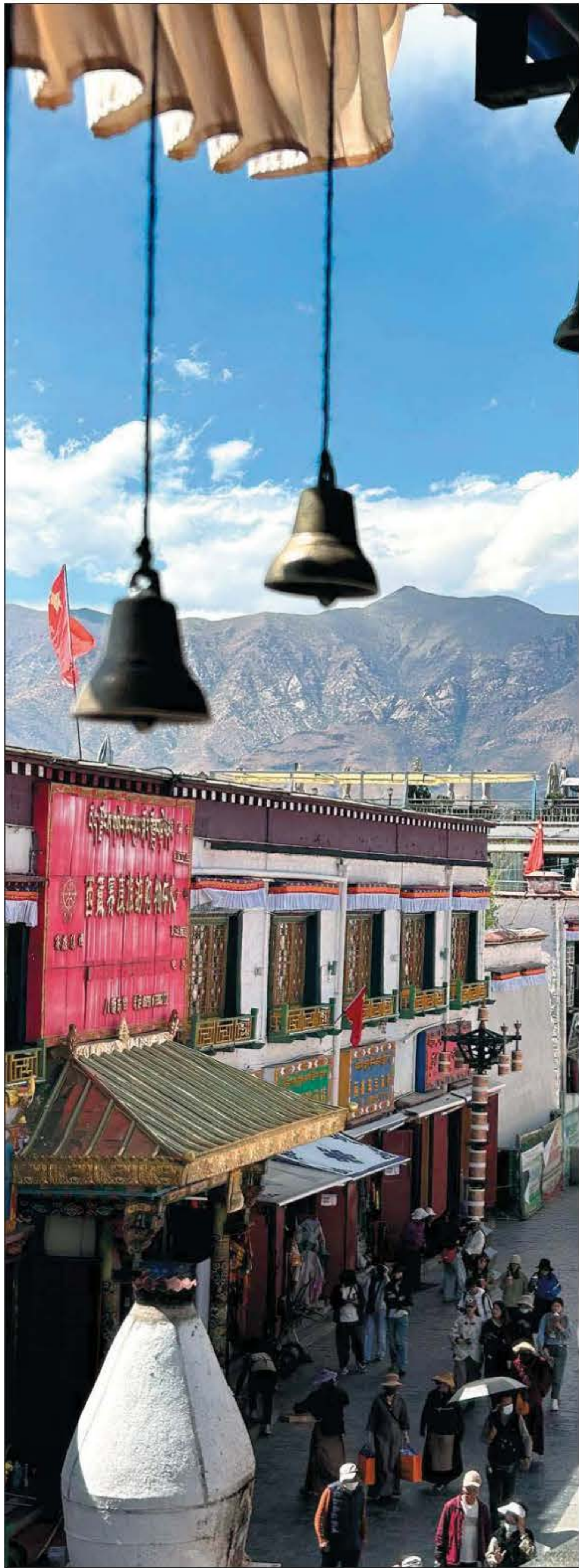
The 300-year-old Tibetan-style compound is now a public museum, and Sonam Drolkar, the venue's director, says the cultural relics, photos and other objects on display show how Xizang has been an indivisible part of China since ancient times.

She says the museum also serves as a community center for elderly residents living along Barkhor Bazaar to spend time together.

This is much the same situation at the Woser Gamchung Tea House. Having worked there for many years, Penba has become friends with many of the regulars, and as he goes about his business, he sometimes stops to



1. A corner of the 1,300-year-old Barkhor Bazaar in Lhasa, Xizang autonomous region, a bustling center of commerce, and home to multiple cultural, artistic and religious venues, as well as residential compounds. LHAMO / FOR CHINA DAILY 2. A Tibetan couple enjoy their neighborhood in June 2019. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY 3. The Jokhang Temple at the center of Barkhor Bazaar, originally a circumambulation path for pilgrims around the temple. LI HENG / FOR CHINA DAILY 4. A view along Barkhor Bazaar. LHAMO / FOR CHINA DAILY 5. Women dressed in traditional Tibetan attire pose for photos in front of the temple in March 2023. LI LIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE 6. A rich display of traditional Tibetan architecture adorns the street. LI HENG / FOR CHINA DAILY 7. The former office of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) government's grand minister in Xizang is now a public museum and community center for elderly residents. LHAMO / FOR CHINA DAILY



“

There are many benches on Barkhor Bazaar. Pilgrims and residents share the benches with visitors like me, and when I did, I sensed harmony.”

Zhang Kemeng, traveler

BUSTLING

By LIN QI and DAQIONG in Lhasa

Step off Barkhor Bazaar and into the narrow surrounding alleyways and you soon feel as if you are entering another world, away from the hustle and bustle beyond.

Silence is restored upon entering one of the old courtyards and closing its doors, where you are let into the home of Penba, a female group leader of the courtyard, designated by the community, and her secret back garden.

Having lived here since she was a child, the 61-year-old sometimes begins her day by getting up at 6 am to sweep the courtyard and clean the shared toilet on the second floor of the two-story structure. As she goes about her routine, she records it on her mobile phone and later uploads the short video to a group chat on WeChat.

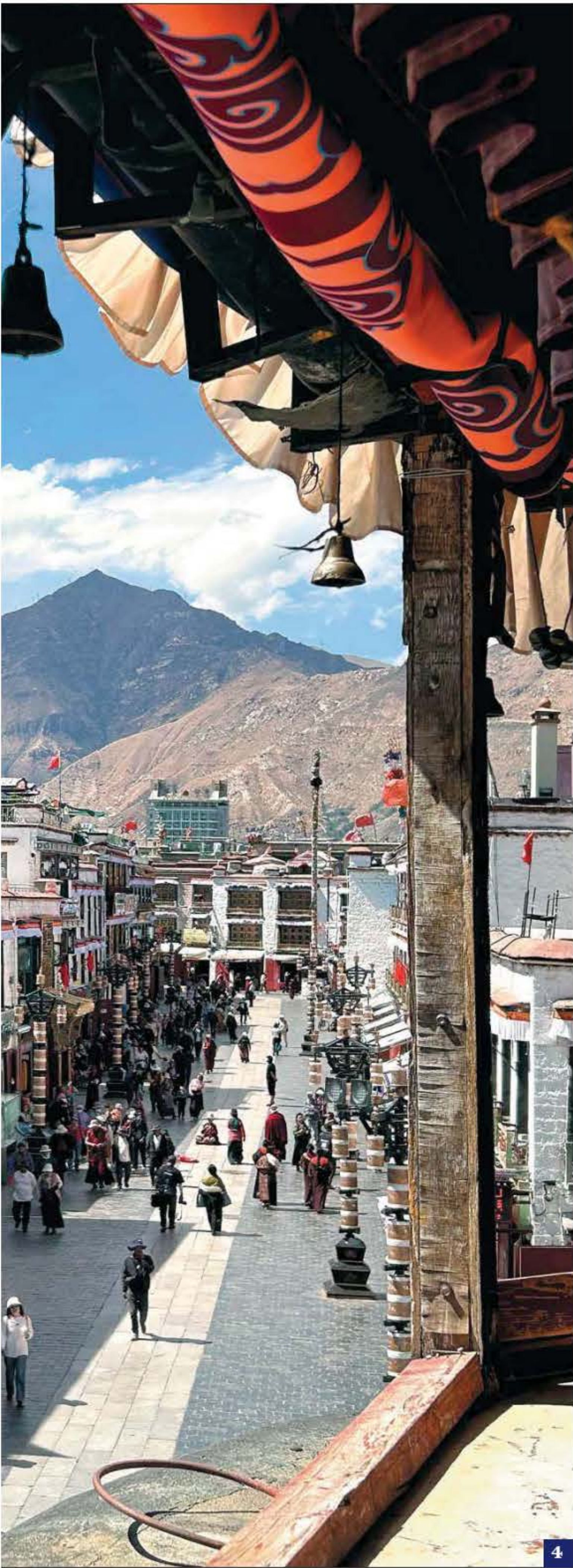
The members are all courtyard residents from some 18 households, who take it in turns to do the morning cleaning, and prove they've done their job via short videos.



ded to their multilayered charm and vigor with the passage of time. China Daily is taking readers on a journey to some of these timeless areas, 's pious steps along Barkhor Bazaar, which encircles the sacred Jokhang Temple, where a traditional Tibetan lifestyle flourishes alongside a modern vibe.

TASTE OF TEA AND UNITY

tradition of commerce and culture, **Lin Qi** and **Daqiong** report in Lhasa.



sit and chat with them for a bit. He says winter is the busiest time, as people need hot sweet tea to keep warm.

Home delivery is also popular, and different volumes of sweet tea can be purchased. Penba says that, once, the tea house received 200 requests for the maximum 3.6 kilogram order amount in a single day.

The tea is normally served in a glass cup.

"In the past, a glass cost 1 *jiao*, a tenth of a yuan, now it is 1 yuan (\$0.14)," he says.

Placing orders and paying is done in the traditional way and constitutes an essential part of the sweet tea culture in Xizang. A customer places 1 yuan on the table, then staff come with a glass, fill it, and retrieve the money. When the customer wants more, they place another 1 yuan on the table, and wait for the staff to refill the cup and take the money.

Those used to e-payment must go to the front desk to purchase banknotes and coins before taking a seat and ordering in the traditional way.

The way people enjoy milk tea is changing in Lhasa, where modern milk tea brands have opened, offering many new flavors and blends.

"It is totally fine," Penba says. "We are sticking to our tradition, and they are doing business in their own way."

No wonder Zhang Kemeng, a tourist from Yinchuan in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, felt that it was a pity he missed out on authentic experience at the Woser Gamchung Tea House when he visited Lhasa earlier this year.

Zhang visited with friends in mid-February and stayed in the autonomous region for about a week.

It was his first time and he says they chose mid-February to visit because Spring Festival and the Tibetan Losar New Year both fell on Feb 10 this year, and they wanted to experience the festive atmosphere.

Zhang first joined his friends in Nyingchi city and from there, they began their journey.

After reaching Lhasa, their final destination, Zhang remained in the city for three days after his friends flew back. "Lhasa maintains a balance between modern structures and an authentic feel."

His hotel was close to Barkhor Bazaar, and he spent time there every day.

"One of the most fruitful experiences I had was a guided tour of the Jokhang Temple. I booked a two-person tour with a guy from Beijing. Our guide not only told us everything about the temple, but also elaborated on the history of Xizang, its culture and religion, and great historical figures. It was a very informative three-hour tour."

He says it was a pity that some shops and restaurants, including the Woser Gamchung Tea House, were closed at the time because of the New Year celebrations.

"Still, I had the best yak milk at

another tea house. It tasted quite smooth."

Zhang says he was impressed by the people's optimism. "They were so into dancing and singing together, and they always wanted to share the joy and blessings with us."

The harmonious atmosphere of Barkhor Bazaar binds people of different ethnic groups and those of different cultural backgrounds, among them Ratna Kumar, the Nepali owner of the Syamukapu Nepali Shop, which sells Buddhist statues.

Ratna Kumar says his family opened the shop on Barkhor Bazaar about 140 years ago. Born in Kathmandu, he came to Lhasa when he was 28 to take over the family business. He says he planned to stay for three years and has ended up staying for four decades and starting family in Lhasa after marrying a Tibetan woman.

"When I first arrived in Lhasa, and I visited Barkhor Bazaar and the Potala Palace, there were not many people and only few tourists," he says.

Customers to his shop at the time were primarily local residents and monks, but now he welcomes visitors from across China and abroad.

"Lhasa has become my home now. I like my home on Barkhor Bazaar a lot. I like what I have experienced here in the past 40 years."

Xu Meng, an urban planner at the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, says Barkhor has set an example for the integration of different ethnic groups and cultures, especially since the Tang Dynasty.

He says it was also an important commercial hub where commodities transported along major trade routes like the Tea Horse Road were traded, and that today the area is home to a dozen ethnic groups, who live and do business in the area.

Zhang says that seeing people praying, reciting scripture, or prostrating themselves along the circumambulation path around Jokhang Temple was a striking experience. "I felt that the culture and history (of Xizang) was so vividly presented before me."

"Some things haven't changed much here as people are doing what those before them have been doing for centuries," he adds.

"They followed their routines while being watched by tourists and seemed totally oblivious to the curious looks they were getting. That aroused in me the wonderful feeling that those praying and the tourists were in two different worlds, and yet, we respected each other."

Palden Nyima and Yang Lurong contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at linqi@chinadaily.com.cn

OF HECTIC OUTDOORS KEPT AT BAY IN COURTYARDS

She says it is necessary for everyone to obey the rules and ensure the public environment is welcoming to all.

Penba lives with her husband, daughter and two school-age grandchildren in the house on the first floor where she grew up. The family of five shares a home about 36 square meters in size.

She tries to keep the inside and outside of her home clean and cozy.

"I hope every member of the courtyard also feels the same," she says.

This is why she always encourages her neighbors to clean thoroughly and on time, and why every household grows potted flowers to make the old courtyard lively.

The courtyard is home to 45 inhabitants including her family, according to the notice on the wall at the entrance of the courtyard that displays details of the courtyard.

Next to the notice is an emergency box containing medicines for different ailments.

The courtyard has undergone several transformations. Penba says the

earliest she can remember took place between 1995 and 1996.

"The structure was reinforced while the original Tibetan style was retained. The ground was repaved so that when it rains, there isn't dirt everywhere and rooms aren't flooded." Water pipes have also been installed and now residents enjoy the convenience of fetching water from a pump in the courtyard.

According to Xu Meng, an urban planner at the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, since the peaceful liberation of Xizang in 1951 the historical architecture of Barkhor Bazaar and its neighboring alleys and courtyards, known as the Old City of Barkhor, have been renovated, making daily life for people living in the area more comfortable in the process.

"The renovations have been carried on in several stages," he says. "First the protection of certain historical buildings, then the conservation of the layout of the streets and the Old City, and in recent years the improvements to the infrastructure."

Ngakon, secretary of Party working committee of the management committee of the Old City of Barkhor, says the government views the protection of the historical area and improving the conditions of local communities as a priority, and an annual budget of about 20 million yuan (\$3 million) has been invested to fulfill that commitment.

He says that over the years, drainage systems and streetlamps have been added, and the roads are repaved, so that residents feel their living environment improving every year, making them happier.

Among those benefiting from the improvements are Ratna Kumar, the 68-year-old Nepali owner of the Syamukapu Nepali Shop, which sells Buddhist statues. He and his family live above their shop.

Ratna Kumar came to Lhasa in the early 1980s to manage the shop, which his family opened some 140 years ago, and since then, he has settled in the city. He has witnessed living conditions on Barkhor Bazaar change greatly over time.

"Back then (in the 1980s) there were very few cars. Electricity came on at a regular time in the evening, but there was no running water."

He says the situation has been better since the 1990s, and the whole area looks clean and well-organized, so that both tourists and residents have comfortable experiences.

Xu says the renovations are designed to protect and preserve local culture. Tourists are able to feel the vigor of Barkhor Bazaar and the old town of Lhasa, and meanwhile, residents continue to enjoy the convenience of getting the services they need on a daily basis, for example, stores and hospitals are just meters from where they live.

Zhang Kemeng, a frequent traveler from the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, says he has been to almost all the famous tourist destinations across the country, and the uniqueness of Barkhor Bazaar is that it combines folk tradition, ethnic culture and religion, as well as enough commercial offerings to meet the needs of tourists.

"Quite frankly, I'm not against commercialization — the gift shops, studios doing makeup and photo services, must-visit restaurants and other *daka* (social media check-in) sites — as long as they don't disturb local residents. Some of these small businesses are either run by, or employ, people living along the street. It is part of their livelihood."

"There are many benches on Barkhor Bazaar. Pilgrims and residents share the benches with visitors like me, and when I did, I sensed harmony," he adds.

Penba says she has never thought about leaving the courtyard of Barkhor Bazaar for an apartment building.

"I belong here," she says.

Palden Nyima and Yang Lurong contributed to this story.



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ILLUSTRATIONS BY LIU CHEN / CHINA DAILY

CULTURAL

文明中国

HERITAGE



The box cover that serves as evidence of the Zidanku silk manuscripts' circulation in the United States is presented at a handover ceremony in Qingdao, Shandong province, on June 20.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Silk manuscripts give hope to academia

For eight decades, scholars follow the journey of the relics through the US, **Wang Ru** reports in Qingdao, Shandong.

In 1942, a long-sealed tomb from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) in the Zidanku (literally “bullet storehouse”) area on the outskirts of Changsha, Hunan province, was plundered by grave robbers who stole the earliest silk manuscripts ever found in China.

Eight decades later, they are still the only known silk manuscripts of the Chu state from the Warring States Period excavated in China.

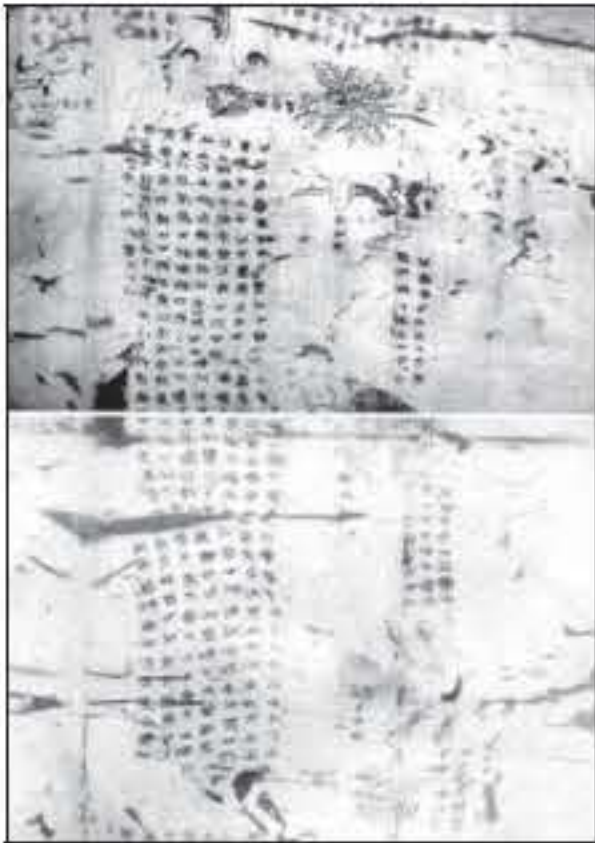
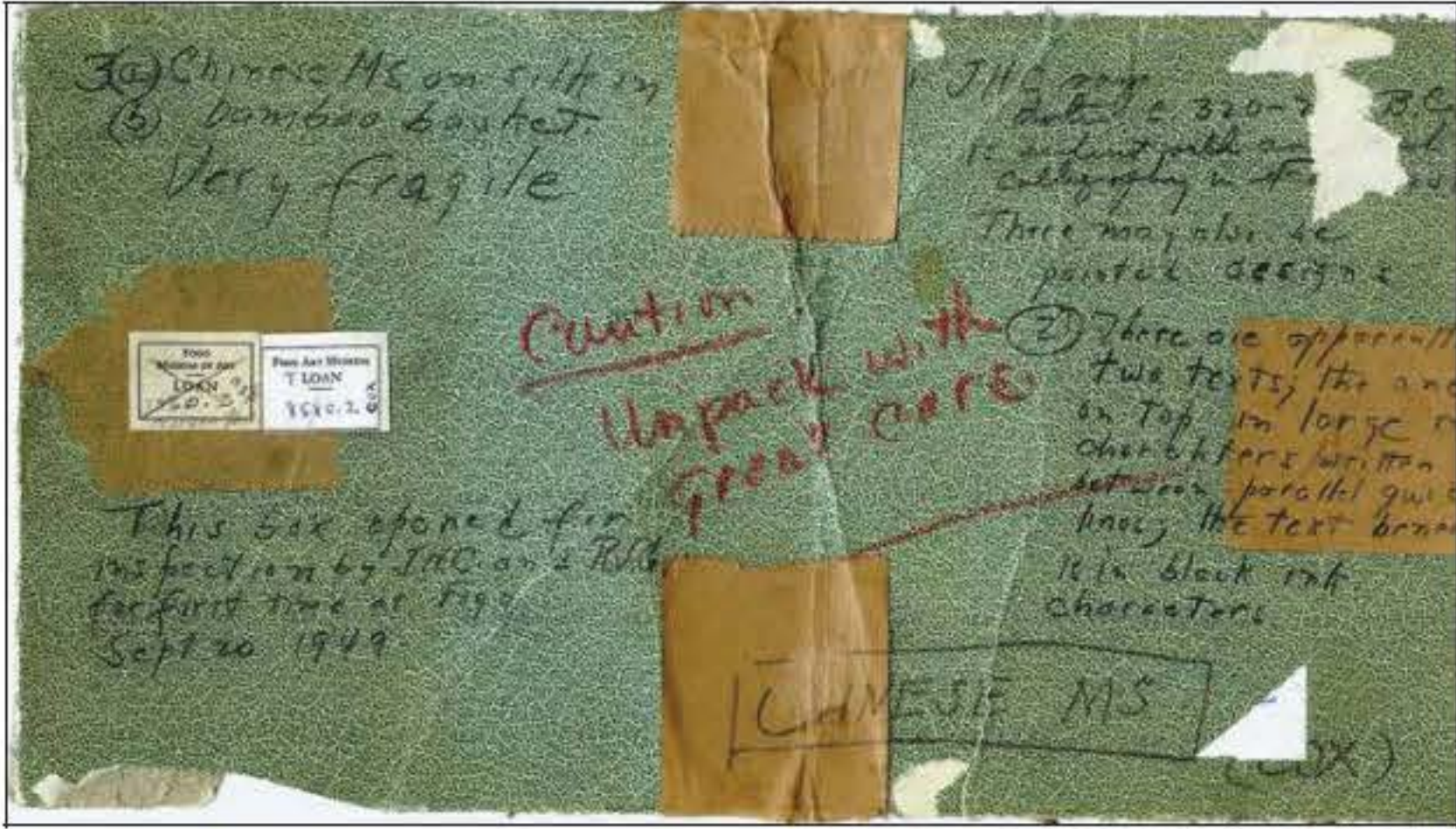
Not long after they were unearthed, they were collected by Cai Jixiang (1898-1979), a local dealer in antiques and amateur historian who studied them. In 1946, John Hadley Cox (1913-2005), an American teacher at Yali High School in Changsha, is said to have cheated Cai and illicitly took the silk manuscripts to the United States.

The artifacts then passed through many hands in the US and were finally housed in the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art. At the same time, Cai attempted to retrieve them but never succeeded.

More than 80 years later, hope has resurfaced of reuniting the precious artifacts with China from the return of a box cover that is viewed as evidence of their circulation in the US handed over from the University of Chicago to China. The box was used to hold the manuscripts, with labels from Fogg Art Museum that can prove the manuscripts were collected at the museum on Sept 16, 1946, an important piece of the evidence chain of the manuscripts' complex journey in the US.

The returning ceremony was held at the International Conference on the Protection and Return of Cultural Objects Removed from Colonial Contexts in Qingdao, Shandong province, on June 20 as part of the 2nd council meeting of the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia.

“Since its unearthing in Changsha in 1942, the Zidanku silk manuscript story has spanned 82 years. It's a fragmentary story with bizarre plots that make people feel heartbroken,” says Li Ling, a veteran archaeology professor at Peking University,



Above: The box cover was used to hold the manuscripts. **Left:** Parts of the Zidanku manuscripts describe the relationship between humans and heaven with writings and pictures of gods from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC).

who has devoted himself to studying the manuscripts for 44 years.

He explains that the story of looted artifacts has many similar versions in colonial and semi-colonial countries, where items from ancient sites were sold or robbed and are now spread around the world.

“As a result, when we want to study these sites, we need to investigate where the relics are now and piece together information,” says Li.

Li says from the Warring States Period to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), silk

coexisted with *jiandu*, or bamboo and wooden slips, as writing materials before the wide use of paper.

Studies show that the Zidanku manuscripts describe the relationship between humans and heaven with more than 900 Warring States Period characters and pictures of mythical gods. They have three parts — the former two are about traditional Chinese almanacs and the third part is about the application of *shushu*, or ancient China's occultism in military affairs, Li says.

One of the highlights is the “ordinances

of the five agents,” an ancient way of dividing a year into 30 solar terms and five parts, each lasting 72 days based on *wuxing*, or five agents, the five elements in ancient Chinese philosophy. This is different from the systems now followed dividing a year into four seasons, 12 months and 24 solar terms.

“Zidanku manuscripts are important not only as the earliest silk manuscripts in China written with Warring States Period characters but because they reflect the outlook on the universe, philosophy and religion of ancient China,” Li says.

He says Zidanku manuscripts are just like China's version of the Dead Sea Scrolls, one of the oldest surviving manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. “The scrolls, dating back to 200-100 BC, were unearthed five years later than Zidanku manuscripts, which date back to 300 BC. Just as the Dead Sea Scrolls are important for the study of Western and Christian culture, the Zidanku manuscripts open a door for us to glimpse into the ancient Chinese world of occultism,” says Li.

He says people often have the impression that ancient Chinese people highlighted liberal arts more than technologies, but it has been found not true. For example, in *Yiwenzhi*, a section of the *Book of Han* authored by historian Ban Gu (32-92), more than half of the content is about the art of war, *shushu* and technology.

“Ancient Chinese cared a lot about natural law, the universe, the human body, medicine and military affairs. These things occupy half of ancient China's academic studies,” says Li. “This half is often ignored, but unearthed discoveries like the manuscripts help us open the door to this world.”

Li has traced every part of the manuscripts' journey from China to the US and published his famous collection *Zidanku Silk Manuscripts* in 2017, elaborating on his investigation of how the artifacts were unearthed, transported to the US and their circulation.

Archaeologist Lothar von Falkenhausen at the University of California, Los Angeles, says although the manuscripts have been in the US for eight decades, they have only been seen by the people over two days — once in 1968 and the other in 1990.

“Since they are fragile and cannot be exhibited for a long time, they have rarely been showcased. And ordinary people can hardly understand their significance,” says Von Falkenhausen.

“The manuscripts should be returned to China's academia as soon as possible, since almost all scholars who can understand and study the manuscripts are in China,” he adds.

Li also mentions the tomb that yielded the Zidanku manuscripts was re-excavated by the Hunan Museum in 1973, uncovering another big discovery of a silk painting depicting a man riding a dragon. It is one of the only two Warring States Period silk paintings preserved to date.

“Half of the cultural relics from the same tomb are in China and the other half are in the US. I hope they can be brought together for academic research,” says Li.

Sinologist Donald John Harper, a professor at the University of Chicago, has also been involved with studying the manuscripts for decades. He highlighted the cooperation between Chinese and US scholars in the research of the artifacts.

“I have been acquainted with Li for four decades. We are colleagues and good friends and I think highly of our friendship. Chinese and US Sinologists have had good cooperation for nearly half a century, which is good for our research and protection of such relics,” says Harper.

Li says silk manuscripts have only been found in the Zidanku tomb and the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24) Ma-wangdui tombs in Changsha. The latter has been known for the discovery of a perfectly preserved female body in 1972.

Contact the writer at wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese cultural treasures recently returned from the United States

In 2009, China and the United States signed a key intergovernmental agreement on combating the theft and illegal trade of cultural relics. The document has been extended every five years since.

In the past decade, the US has returned over 440 cultural relics to China thanks to close cooperation between the two countries in related fields. Here is a list of important cultural repatriations in the past year or so.



Two panels of stone funeral beds (between the 4th and 7th centuries)

The two panels with decorative patterns in reliefs were painted in different colors and adorned with gold foil. They were transferred back to China from New York in May 2023.

The relics were seized by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and US Homeland Security Investigations as part of a criminal case. The National Cultural Heritage Administration cooperated with the US to launch the repatriation

process in April last year and soon reached an agreement.

The panels are of high historical, scientific and artistic value. They are considered to be originally from North China and installed on the front side of a stone bed. They demonstrate exchange among various civilizations along the ancient Silk Road. Its decorative patterns show a mixture of traditional Han Chinese elements and those of Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic religion from ancient Persia, like the exotic altar with flames. The panels were exhibited in the Palace Museum in Beijing last year.

Feng Xingshu Gui from the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC)

The 2,800-year-old bronzeware was sent from San Francisco to Beijing in January.

The vessel, known as *gui*, is 18 centimeters tall and 21 cm in diameter and weighs about 6 kilograms and is composed of a large bowl that has double handles in the design of a coil-nose animal face, resting on three feet shaped like those of an animal.

An inscription cast in the interior of the vessel reveals its identity — it was “crafted by (nobleman) Xingshu of the Feng (vassal) state, dedicated to his wife”. It was excavated from a cellar in Fufeng county, Shaanxi province, in 1978 and was later housed in a local museum but was stolen in 1984 by burglars.



Decades later, Raymond King, an entrepreneur based in Portland, Oregon, found the relic in a New York apartment when he helped his mother clear out her belongings. When he referred it to Sotheby's auction house, he was told it was stolen from China.

Since the theft 40 years ago, China had never given up looking for it, and Interpol listed it as stolen art in 2017. The London-based Art Loss Register then put the item in its database. Consequently, when Sotheby's researcher contacted the register about the vessel, the register informed the Chinese embassy in London and was later connected with the National Cultural Heritage Administration in Beijing, which later initiated its repatriation from the US.

38 relics, mainly Tibetan Buddhist items from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties

The artifacts were returned to China from New York in April.

In March, the National Cultural Heritage

Administration was informed that the Manhattan District Attorney's Office had seized 38 cultural relics while solving a smuggling case. These relics were believed to have come from China.

Among the returned relics are Buddha statues, ritual tools and religious ornaments. They are made of various materials such as bronze, clay, ivory and wood, and are crafted using techniques such as carving, sculpting and painting.

Experts believe the objects demonstrate diverse subjects, varied craftsmanship, rich content and exquisite production techniques, and are thus of significant historical, cultural and scientific value.

A Qing Dynasty official robe

A crimson silk robe was recently donated by US citizen Paul Hollister to the National Cultural Heritage Administration. On June 19, the administration allocated the robe to Shandong University Museum in Qingdao, Shandong province, to commemorate the enduring friendship between the Chinese and American people.

The robe once belonged to Hollister's great-grandfather, US missionary Watson McMillan Hayes (1857-1944), who was instrumental in the establishment of what is now Shandong University in 1901, where he served as a teacher.

Hayes dedicated his life to education in China, enduring hardships during World War II when he was captured by Japanese forces and



interned in a concentration camp in what is now Weifang, Shandong, in 1942. Despite being offered the opportunity to leave the camp and return home by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Hayes chose to give that chance to younger individuals. He passed away in the camp in 1944, expressing his unwavering commitment to the education cause in China and his willingness to be laid to rest in a foreign land.

The robe is typical attire worn by ordinary officials during festive occasions in the late Qing Dynasty. Adorned with intricate embroidery featuring an array of decorative motifs, such as auspicious clouds, cranes, bats and longevity characters, the robe is a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the era.

WANG KAIHAO AND WANG RU

SPORTS

SOCCER

Dire draw puts pressure on Southgate

England tops its group and avoids the tougher side of the bracket, but fans are left frustrated by poor performances

COLOGNE, Germany — Top of the group, unbeaten and on the favorable side of the draw for the knockout phase of Euro 2024. It's a case of job done for England at this stage of the tournament.

Try telling that to the fans, who jeered loudly and threw beer cups as the final whistle blew on a 0-0 draw with Slovenia at Cologne Stadium on Tuesday.

Criticism of England's performances in Germany has been fierce.

"I've not seen any team qualify and receive similar," manager Gareth Southgate said.

Southgate believes he and his England team could be paying the price for its success under his leadership. Safe passage through to the round of 16 maintains his personal record of advancing from the group stage of every major tournament he's taken charge of, dating back to the World Cup in 2018.

"I think probably expectation (is different). Over the last six or seven years, we've made England fun again. I think it has been enjoyable for the players," Southgate said. "We've got to be very, very careful that it stays that way."

England hasn't been fun to watch at these Euros, though, with a 1-0 win against Serbia its only victory in Group C. That was followed by a 1-1 draw with Denmark and the scoreless draw with Slovenia.

Three games, two goals and a whole lot of underwhelmed fans.

The performance against Denmark was apparently so uninspired that former captain and now BBC presenter Gary Lineker used an expletive to describe it. And, despite claiming he was "oblivious" to Lineker's stinging critique, it contributed to the "unusual environment" Southgate said he was working in at this tournament.

The atmosphere was hardly helped by plastic beer cups being thrown on the field as Southgate and his players went to applaud England supporters after the match.



Embattled England manager Gareth Southgate with his players after their Euro 2024 Group C match against Slovenia in Cologne, Germany, on Tuesday. The match ended in a goalless draw, which was enough for both teams to progress to the knockout stage. REUTERS

"I'm not going to back down from going over and thanking the fans, who were brilliant during the game," he said. "They might feel differently towards me. But for me, we only will succeed if we are together."

Southgate led England to the semifinals of the World Cup in 2018 and the final of the last Euros, but his team will likely need a sharp upturn in form if it is to live up to its pre-tournament billing as one of the favorites for the European title.

Still, England has at least ended up on the opposite side of the draw

to Spain, France, Germany and Portugal and will play one of the best third-place teams in the next round after advancing as group winner.

"That was the aim before the start of the tournament. Come top of the group and control our destiny," captain Harry Kane said.

The result also meant Slovenia reached the round of 16 for the first time and Croatia was eliminated.

"We are such a small country, with such a big heart and mental strength. That's why I'm very proud of my team," coach Matjaz Kek said.

"This is only the beginning of a new and beautiful era for Slovenian football."

While it was a proud night for Slovenians, it was another performance that highlighted England's attacking issues, with substitute Cole Palmer coming closest to scoring a winner in stoppage time.

"You can't go into every game with such pressure and score four goals. Football doesn't work like that," Southgate said. "It is important to win the group to control your own destiny."

Southgate's men can perhaps take some measure of comfort from recent history. They were terrible in a 0-0 draw with Scotland in the group stage three years ago before going on to finish runner-up to Italy at Euro 2020.

"You never want to look back having not topped the group and spiral into tough matches where people can then accuse you that, because you didn't win the group then you've ended up with a tougher draw," Southgate said.

On the plus side for England,

which is unbeaten in its last 14 European Championship group stage matches going back to a 2-1 loss to France in 2004, it has wound up on the opposite side of the knockout draw to the other tournament favorites.

Slovenian celebrations

It took 20 minutes for England to pose a serious threat, and only the offside flag denied it a slick opening goal.

Declan Rice picked out Phil Foden's run, but the Manchester City midfielder had strayed beyond the Slovenian defense before squaring for Bukayo Saka to tap in.

Southgate took action at the break, and Conor Gallagher was replaced by Kobbie Mainoo.

The 19-year-old added some much needed thrust to the England midfield, but it still struggled to turn dominance in possession into chances.

Kane saw a header cleared by Benjamin Sesko from a corner and Rice flashed a shot wide from the edge of the box.

Southgate answered the call to give Cole Palmer his first outing at the tournament in the final 20 minutes.

The Chelsea midfielder, who scored 26 goals at club level this season, had England's only shot on target of the second half, but failed to seriously test veteran goalkeeper Jan Oblak.

A point was jubilantly celebrated by the Slovenians, as it was enough for them to progress as one of the best third-placed sides thanks to three draws from their three games.

Kek's men missed out on second place in the group solely due to Denmark's better disciplinary record.

"I didn't expect to be going into the knockout phase," said Kek.

"But, we showed with our play against one of the favorites for the tournament that we deserve to be here and to go into the knockouts."

AGENCIES



Kylian Mbappe, wearing a protective mask, lines up a second-half penalty on his return to France duty for its Euro 2024 Group D clash against Poland on Tuesday. The match ended 1-1. REUTERS

Mbappe's return fails to mask France's shortcomings

DORTMUND, Germany — The welcome sight of a masked Kylian Mbappe back on the pitch could not disguise another under-par performance from France at Euro 2024, which raises questions about its chances of winning the competition.

France is through to the last 16 after emerging unbeaten from the first round, but Tuesday's 1-1 draw with Poland in Dortmund means it finishes second in Group D behind Austria.

Ironically, Austria is the only team the 2022 World Cup runner-up has managed to beat so far at the competition, as it followed its 1-0 victory over Ralf Rangnick's men with a 0-0 draw against the Netherlands and then an insufficient display in which it was held by the already-eliminated Poland.

There are consequences for that, as Les Bleus now find themselves in what looks to be the wrong half of a

lop-sided draw in the knockout rounds.

Next up is a return on Monday to Dusseldorf, where Mbappe suffered a broken nose against Austria.

France will be up against the runner-up of a tight Group E, which could be any one of Belgium, Romania, Slovakia or Ukraine.

However, after that, the path to the final looks especially murky, with the possibility of a quarterfinal against Portugal and then a potential last-four tie against Spain or Germany.

France has been the best European team at the last two World Cups, winning the trophy in 2018 and losing on penalties to Argentina in the final 18 months ago.

It does not look like the best side on the continent right now, which is a problem for a nation hoping to win a third European Championship, and a first since 2000.

Mbappe returned against Poland after missing the Netherlands match due to his broken nose. Playing with a protective face mask, he converted a second-half penalty to register his first-ever Euros goal.

Where are the goals?

It was his 13th goal for France at a major tournament, putting him level with Just Fontaine who scored all of his at the 1958 World Cup, and behind the 14 of Michel Platini.

But Mbappe's goal was not enough to beat Poland, as Robert Lewandowski replied with a spot-kick of his own.

France scored 16 goals in seven matches at the last World Cup, then netted 29 in eight qualifiers for the Euros, albeit 17 of those came against Gibraltar.

However, it has failed to score a single goal in open play so far at this tournament, beating Austria thanks

to an own goal and drawing a blank against the Dutch, before Mbappe's penalty against Poland.

Coach Didier Deschamps, nevertheless, pointed out that his team was regularly thwarted throughout the game by Poland goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski, who was named man of the match.

"I have full confidence in our attackers," insisted midfielder Eduardo Camavinga. "We need them, and they have always shown up in the past."

Above all, France can go forward into the knockout rounds in the knowledge that its defense looks secure, with Lewandowski's penalty the only goal it has conceded so far.

"The team spirit is there, so is the solidarity, and we are creating chances," said Deschamps, and only Germany has had more attempts on goal than the French.

"Maybe other teams have shown

greater potential, and the fact we are not scoring goals has limited us.

"Some groups might not have been too difficult, but our group really was. Now we can have a little break, which will do us good, and then we move on to the last 16.

"The impressions left after the first round are not always the same later on. Our objective was to qualify. We have done that, and now it is only big teams who are left."

For France to keep going from here, though, Deschamps will notably need to get Antoine Griezmann back playing at his best — the forward, with 132 caps, was dropped against Poland, which is a rarity.

And he will especially be hoping that his team starts scoring, as captain Mbappe gets used to his mask and attempts to lead the team through the knockout rounds.

AFP

Staunch Chile defense undone by Argentina's late winner

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey — Substitute Lautaro Martinez grabbed an 88th-minute winner as Argentina finally overcame Chile 1-0 on Tuesday, booking its place in the quarterfinals of the Copa America.

Lionel Messi hit the post for Argentina in the first half, but the World Cup winner had its goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez to thank for keeping it on level terms before Lautaro's late strike settled a pulsating clash in front of 82,000 fans at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

There were enough openings for the 15-time Copa America champion to get the breakthrough much earlier, but a combination of poor finishing and an inspired performance from Chile's 41-year-old goalkeeper Claudio Bravo left the score deadlocked.

The home of the NFL's New York Jets and New York Giants — and

venue for the 2026 World Cup final — was transformed into a home venue for Argentina, and the expectant crowd saw Messi and company dictate proceedings in the early stages.

Messi's strike partner Julian Alvarez forced Bravo into a save in the 22nd minute with a first-time shot after Nicolas Gonzalez had pulled the ball back from the byline.

Chile was doing a good job of neutralizing Messi, closing him down with as many as three players on occasion.

But, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner was inches away from an opener in the 36th minute, with a shot from 25 yards that clipped the outside of the post.

Chile has twice left Argentina distraught, with victories in the Copa America finals of 2015 and 2016, the latter, also played at MetLife Stadium, saw Messi react by briefly quit-

ting the national side.

But, while Chile proved stubborn, there is a real swagger about the world champion and a belief that it can always turn a game its way.

As Argentina piled on the pressure, Bravo did well after the break to parry away a blast at the near post from Nahuel Molina, and then showed great reactions to push a fierce Nicolas Gonzalez drive against the bar.

Chile threatened on the counter, and twice Argentina goalkeeper Martinez had to be at his best to deny drives from Rodrigo Echeverria.

The decisive moment came when Chile failed to clear an in-swinging corner from Messi and Lautaro pounced to grab the winner, which was confirmed after a lengthy VAR offside check.

Lautaro should have added a second after a breakaway from Angel

Di Maria, but in the end the solitary goal was enough to make it two wins out of two for Argentina, booking its place in the next round with a game to spare.

"I got in there and I was able to score. These games are always like that, we have to keep playing in the same way, treating the games in this way, as they are all going to be complicated," Lautaro told TyC Sports.

In other Copa America action, Jonathan David scored the only goal as Canada reignited its campaign with a 1-0 victory over 10-man Peru in sweltering Kansas City.

Lille striker David — who is reportedly being targeted by Manchester United and Chelsea — once again demonstrated his eye for goal with a cool finish to secure all three points at Children's Mercy Park Stadium.



Argentina's Lautaro Martinez celebrates scoring the winning goal in the 2024 Copa America Group A match against Chile at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on Tuesday. AFP

AFP

SPORTS

ROAD TO OLYMPICS

Editor's note: With the Olympic stage set, and golden glory beckoning, Chinese athletes have been going all-out to ensure it will be a medal-laden campaign at Paris 2024.

LOOKING TO SMASH IT

Team China's shuttling aces aim for a clean sweep in Paris

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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Watch out! The most dominant force in badminton is all set to reign supreme at the Olympics again.

With its collective strength restored and tested at recent major tournaments, the Chinese badminton team is primed and looking to serve up a gold-laden campaign at the Paris Olympics, leaning on a depth and diversity that no other contenders can match.

Led by the red-hot men's singles star Shi Yuqi, who has just replaced Danish ace Viktor Axelsen as the new world No 1, Team China now dominates the world rankings in four of the five events, with women's singles the only discipline topped by a foreign competitor — South Korea's reigning world champion An Se-young.

Team China's "three-peat" — winning the world mixed team title at the Sudirman Cup and the men's and women's team crowns at the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals, respectively — over the past 13 months has raised high hopes that a clean sweep of all five golds at the Olympics, achieved only once in history by the invincible Chinese squad at London 2012, is possible in the French capital.

Zhang Jun, president of the Chinese Badminton Association, did not mince words about Team China's Paris ambition.

"Of course we will try our best to compete for gold in all five events," Zhang said at the launch of the "Popular Badminton" International Legends Tour in Guangzhou on Monday.

"Our final preparation is going well. Physically, the players are all healthy and with no injury concerns. We've tailored specific training plans for each athlete, targeting their main opponents.

"We just have to help our athletes stay focused, try to take the pressure off them and approach everything as we normally would," said Zhang, who won back-to-back mixed doubles Olympic titles with partner Gao Ling at the 2000 and 2004 Games.



Clockwise from top: Women's doubles queens Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan; rising men's doubles pair Liang Weikeng and Wang Chang; and world No 1 mixed duo Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong are striving to cement China's status as a badminton powerhouse at the Paris Olympics. XINHUA

bles Olympic titles with partner Gao Ling at the 2000 and 2004 Games.

Shi's time to peak

As China's first men's world No 1 since retired Olympic champion Chen Long in 2016, Shi has been enjoying a dream season, which saw him win four singles titles in five finals on the BWF World Tour and help the Chinese men's squad win its 11th Thomas Cup last month in Chengdu.

Hailed as the successor of the legendary Lin "Super" Dan and Chen, Shi's career has suffered a series of setbacks, including three surgeries and a disciplinary suspension, which had threatened to derail his career before it fully took off. The spell of misfortune, however, has simply proved to be a test on his path to something great, as a newfound momentum is building at just the right time.

"Mentally, I've become more mature and I'm much more motivated again with the Olympics approaching. I will cherish the opportunity and go all-out to try to reach the top step of the podium," said the 28-year-old.

Shi's attempt to win it all in Paris will face a stern challenge from defending Olympic champion Axelsen, who leads 9-3 head-to-head against Shi, but has suffered two straight losses to the Chinese star and conceded the top ranking spot after spending 132 weeks there.

Defending Asian champion Jonathan Christie of Indonesia has emerged as another serious threat, having upset Shi twice this year in the All England Open semifinals and Asian Championships quarterfinals.

Having almost seen it and done it all at the elite level, former singles world champion Zhao Jianhua encouraged Shi to embrace the pressure and draw power from within.

"The pressure of competing at the Olympics and representing your country only once every four years is huge. Yet, all the top athletes have been conditioned to live with it and get motivated by it," said Zhao, a 59-year-old legend who won back-to-back Asian Games singles titles in 1986 and 1990.

"For Shi, I hope he's improved his mental game well enough to be able to deliver under pressure at the Olympics."

Chasing history

In women's singles, reigning Olympic champion Chen Yufei is bidding to write her name into history, as she aims to become just the second woman of all time to retain her Olympic gold, following in the footsteps of Hall of Famer Zhang Ning, who achieved the feat in 2004 and 2008.

South Korea's world and Asian Games champion An is the biggest threat to Chen's ambition.

World No 3 Tai Tzu-ying of Chinese Taipei, Japan's two-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi and

Spanish veteran Caroline Marin, the first and only non-Asian Olympic women's singles champion (Rio 2016), are all legitimate medal contenders as well, each coveting Chen's title.

"To stay healthy and control the little errors in training and competition. That's my priority leading up to Paris. As long as I take care of myself and deliver my best, I am confident that I still have a good chance to defend my title," Chen said last month after helping Team China lift a record-extending 16th Uber Cup title in Chengdu.

"This process will be very difficult for sure," said Chen, who just posted consecutive wins against Marin and An to clinch her 17th career title on the BWF tour at the Indonesia Open earlier this month.

"It's about taking things one step at a time, and handling every detail in the process as I strive to achieve this goal."

In doubles, China's world No 1 mixed pair Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong will try to make up for the only missing trophy in their glittering cabinet — an Olympic gold medal.

Women's doubles queens Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan are also heading to Paris on a redemption mission, as the four-time world champion duo looks to cap what might be their final Olympics in gold. They will need to put their surprising defeat to Indonesia's Greysia Polli and Apriyani Rahayu in the final at Tokyo 2020 behind them to do so.

The men's doubles in Paris will see perhaps the most open medal fight among all five events, with China's young pair Liang Weikeng and Wang Chang, both born in the early 2000s, challenging an experienced field of opponents from South Korea, India, Malaysia and Denmark.

The badminton tournament takes place from July 27 to Aug 5 at the Porte de La Chapelle Arena, involving 172 athletes.

Retired stars rally for event

By SUNXIAOCHEN

With the world's best shuttlers primed for a fierce Olympic tournament, badminton enthusiasts from China and France are celebrating the opportunity to personally enjoy the sport in Paris at their own high-profile event.

The "Popular Badminton" International Legends Tour, a grassroots badminton promotional project launched in Guangzhou on Monday, will see some of the best performers from a national amateur championship — which kicked off on June 15 in Changsha and will visit at least 10 more cities, including Beijing, Guangzhou and Chengdu — head to Paris during the Olympics to take part in a grand sports and culture exchange involving young people from both countries. The event is set to take place from Aug 7-9.

A group of retired stars, including two-time men's Asian Games champion Zhao Jianhua, mixed and men's doubles Olympic gold medalist Zhang Nan and former women's world No 1 Zhou Mi, have

been invited to participate as ambassadors for the project, as well as to host junior training programs and play exhibition matches with amateurs at the various city stops.

Some of them will also join the event in Paris, to be held at the Hippodrome Paris-Vincennes, to interact with fans, French badminton stars and celebrities at the festival, as part of a series of exchanges to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and France.

"The project will integrate badminton promotion into a grand celebration of art, culture and diplomatic exchanges, which helps popularize the sport in a creative and inclusive way," Zhang Jun, president of Chinese Badminton Association, said at the launch ceremony.

Olivier Grandjean, a French-language TV producer, host and writer, wished the project great success.

"It is a fantastic opportunity. The Olympics is an exceptional occasion to share emotions and common interests, despite the political differences between countries," he said.

Reigning Olympic champion Chen Yufei is bidding to write her name into history. XINHUA



Soundbites

"For sure, the ultimate goal of every athlete is to step on the highest podium at the Olympics. Yet it has to be realized step by step. I hope our athletes can stay focused on every detail of their training and preparation, block out distractions from the outside world and stick to their respective plans to bring out their best."

Zhang Nan, two-time doubles Olympic champion (2012, 2016)

"I think the women's singles competition is quite open now. Chen Yufei, as the defending champion, has her advantages in experience and finesse. Physically and technically, she's still in her prime at 26. Despite strong challenges from the rest of the world, I still pick her as a favorite as long as she stays healthy and produces her best."

Wang Yihan, singles world champion (2011) and Olympic silver medalist (2012)

"It's almost impossible to make any more breakthroughs physically, or tactically, with a month to go before the Olympics. The most important thing now is to relieve the pressure on the athletes and help them concentrate on their daily routines as normal, without caring too much about potential outcomes. I am confident that, when Team China finishes the Paris Olympics, we will be satisfied with the results."

Tian Qing, a two-time doubles world champion (2014, 2015) and Olympic champion (2012)*



Men's singles star Shi Yuqi will lead China's charge at the Paris Olympics. XINHUA